

BOOK Magazine

VOLUME FORTY-SIX
NUMBER TWO

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in the

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"The Rich Boy"

THAT is the perfect title for Mr. Fitzgerald's latest story—a story, by the way, which he feels to be the best of all the forty-three he has thus far written in his splendid career. And aside from his shorter tales, you will remember his "This Side of Paradise" and, more recently, "The Great Gatsby." You must read "The Rich Boy" when it appears in the next—the January—number.

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Life: An Aggressive Campaign

By M. MERCER KENDIG, B. A.

Director, Department of Education, THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

GREAT natures develop slowly. Prodigious sunbursts of genius are rare. The world was not made in six days and forgotten on the seventh. Men do not spring from boys overnight. Boys become men in *their* time, not yours. Nature is patient with boys and girls.

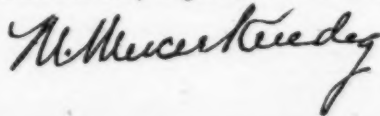
The slow and backward occupy more room in the world than the swift and the forward. And it is more important that boys and girls should know how to do things *properly* than that they should do them quickly and inaccurately. Superficiality is not a virtue; it is a glaring defect.

During the years of quick physical and mental coördination young people learn rapidly to do things deliberately and with a pride in the perfection of what they do. The vocational and professional schools of the country are a mecca for those who want to educate their abilities as well as their heads. Schools which train individuals to do are as important as schools which teach them to *think*. Thought and action are the team which wins every world race; solves every world problem; creates the art and industry and love and happiness of our civilization. And when thought and action are coördinated with a pair of skilled hands, and ten highly sensitized fingers for the accurate "feel" of the thing being made, and a pair of educated eyes which understand what they see, then you have the professional in some vocational calling. In other words, you have the graduate of a professional or vocational school, prepared to contribute the product of his or her skill to the sum of the world and in return reap the world's rewards.

There are many so constituted by nature that text books and lectures do not interest them. They are generally persons of marked individuality, of independent personality. They find their interests and their life lessons in the graphic, the dramatic side of the educative process.

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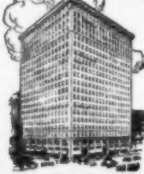
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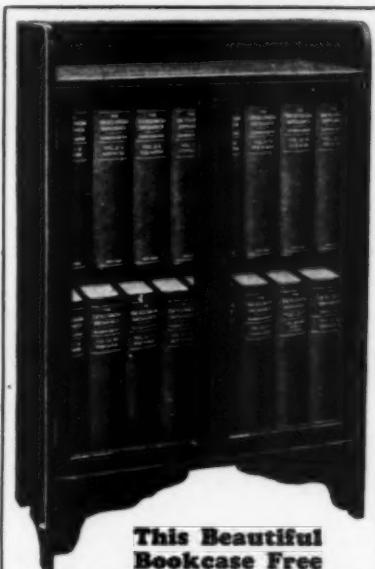
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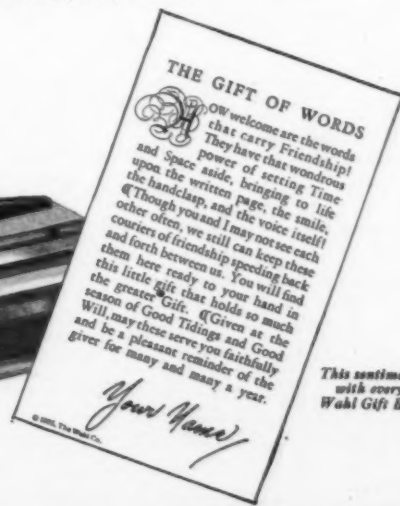
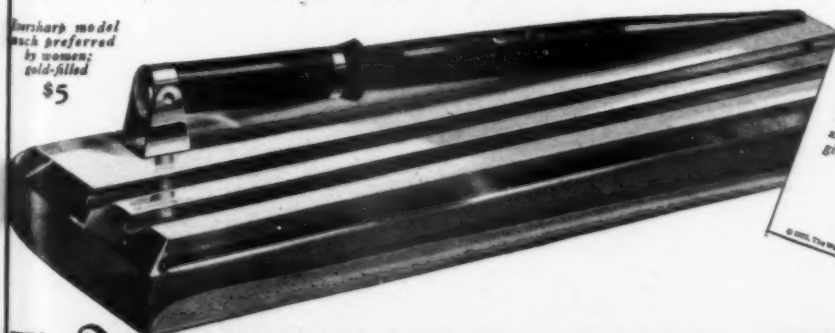
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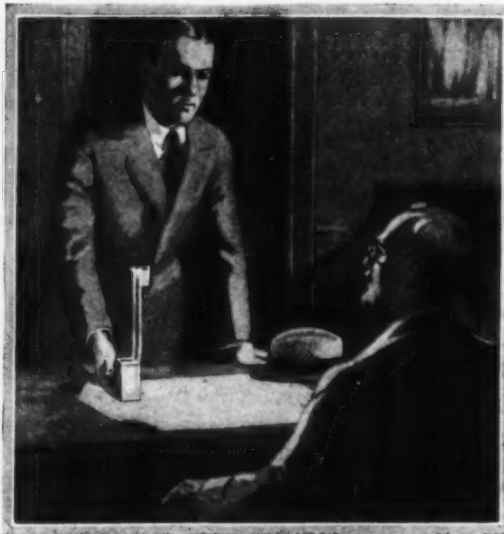
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WHEN I was a little lad I liked peanuts. Through the week I looked forward to Saturday, when the penny, promised for five days of righteousness, would bring me a sackful of satisfaction and joy.

Eyes big, mouth wide with desire, I stood before Peanut John and begged, "A full sack, John. Big ones, please," and John would untwist the ears of the little paper sack and add two, three, plump nuts to its already overflowing load.

Gluttonously I munched my way to the bottom of the bag, where there were always a few misshapen, blackened wisps of things that I should have tossed away. But I didn't. I ate them down to the last bitter crumb. And the suave flavor, the long-stored delight of my feast, vanished. All that remained was the bitter burning in my parched mouth.

Yet I persisted in emptying the sack each time. The waste was always there, and always I ate it until the day when I had no more pleasure in peanuts, when the hissing oven and the fragrance of the little sacks with the twisted ears was no more than a sore memory and a warning.

I wonder why we do that. Why are we not content to take the gifts of life, scooping them up with a wide, free hand, instead of scraping the bottom to its bitterness?

We drain joy to its dregs. We long to know, and feel, and exult, to the last heart-throb. And then comes the desolation of satiety. Beauty probed to the depth becomes sinister. Life drained to its last drop turns to tragedy.

A certain incompleteness belongs to the life of man. We are unfinished beings in an uncompleted universe. The stars are not finished; the mountains are not settled; nor are the waters fixed in their boundaries. Nothing is truly completed in this world.

There is no last word. If we try to pronounce one, it turns to bitterness on our tongue. There is no finality. If we try to halt and say, "Here I stay, fixed, finished, complete," we taste the bitterness of death. For us there is neither complete happiness nor pure sorrow. It was never intended that we plumb either to the depths.

The fine flavor of life is found in its full flow, just beneath the foam. The wise man takes it with a wide gesture and in temperate mood.

For with age and experience comes knowledge, that bitter-sweet fruit of the tree of life. And we know enough to taste it sparingly and pass on with its full savor in our mouths. Not as children we go, but as men, with the abstinence of wisdom.

Life

by

Edgar A. Guest

Decoration by John Scott Williams



A little laughter, and a time for tears,
A stretch of duty, and an hour for play—
'Tis thus we march life's journey through the years
From baby curls to tresses thin and gray.

A friend or two whose faith in us remains;
A roof where love has sheltered every dream,
Has counted all its losses and its gains—
These make the fabric of life's noble scheme.

I saw a game played with a crowd of boys;
Men gave them wire and string and nails and tin
And said: "A prize to him who best employs
These useless things and brings his product in."

Then from those trivial bits grew ships a-sail—
One lad the model of a castle made.
And there I saw us all, who win, who fail,
Although 'twas but a game the youngsters played.

Life gives us bits of joys and bits of cares
And bids us fashion something as a whole.
We choose our own design, and if it bears
The stamp of merit—God rewards the soul.

His acts being

Seven ages

First the Infant

Then the Youth

The Schoolboy

Then the Justice

The Sighing Lover

Then the Soldier



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three favored perfumes of the
world. Inimitable in fragrance,
they define the elusive yet in-
dividual charm of women in
subtly different sweetness —*



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When Beauty is at Stake —take care

*Use a soap made for ONE purpose only:
to safeguard good complexions*



FOR your sake and for ours, we publish this in the interest of all concerned who value a good complexion. Some people, we learn, think ordinary toilet soaps, soaps claiming to be "for the complexion," have Palmolive effects on the skin.

That is wrong. They don't. Palmolive complexions come only from Palmolive.

In old days, women were told, "Use no soaps on the face." For all soaps then were said to be too harsh.

Then came Palmolive. It was made with cosmetic oils famous since the days of Cleopatra. It was made to be used freely, lavishly on the skin. Its **ONE** and **SOLE** purpose was to foster good complexions.

That soap changed previous ideas of soaps. Largely on expert advice, women tried it. And the results it brought in new beauty and new youth attracted millions to its use.

Palmolive soon became the leading toilet soap of the world. In France, home of cosmetics, it supplanted French soaps by the score. It is one of the two largest selling soaps in France today. French women find Palmolive their ideal of a soap. Its cosmetic qualities hold a supreme place in French beauty culture.

Now you may be tempted by rival claims to try unproved soaps on your skin. Think, please, before you do.

60 years of soap study, in the interest of skin

beauty, stand behind Palmolive. It is made to do **ONE** thing well. That is to gently protect your complexion; to guard your youth and charm.

No other claims are made for it. Palmolive is not intended for other than toilet purposes. It is too neutral to be effective for fabrics. To make it good for other than complexion use its cosmetic qualities would be much reduced. Good complexions are too priceless to be endangered, and, frankly, we don't know how to make a beauty soap that is also effective for general use.

There are complexion soaps at 25c and more, we admit, that approach Palmolive quality. We know of some. But Palmolive sells at 10c—no more than ordinary soaps. Enormous production brings you this modest cost.

Carry that in mind, for your own sake, when asked to "try" another soap that claims Palmolive results. When beauty is at stake, use Palmolive, a soap you know is safe to use. It is nature's formula to "Keep That Schoolgirl Complexion."

THE PALMOLIVE COMPANY (Del. Corp.), Chicago, Ill.

French soaps have largely failed to please French women

Palmolive is one of the two largest selling toilet soaps in France today. When you are tempted with French claims for a soap, Madam, please remember that in France, the home of cosmetics, French toilet soaps by the score have given way to Palmolive.

In France, Palmolive Soap is the "imported" soap. French women gladly pay more for it than you pay. The cosmetic qualities of Palmolive Soap hold supreme today in French beauty culture.

Don't buy soaps with "French" claims and expect Palmolive results.

(3006)



Palmolive Soap is untouched by human hands until you break the wrapper — it is never sold unwrapped

Soap from Trees

The only oils in Palmolive Soap are the soothing beauty oils from the olive tree, the African palm and the coconut palm—and no other fats whatsoever.

That is why Palmolive Soap is the natural color that it is—for palm and olive oils, nothing else, give Palmolive its green color!

The only secret to Palmolive is its exclusive blend—and that is one of the world's priceless beauty secrets.

A COMMON-SENSE EDITORIAL

By BRUCE BARTON

Hard-Boiled

SITTING on the front porch of a country club, a sophisticated young gentleman set forth his business biography in these words:

"When I was graduated from college, I was full of ideals and faith in my fellow-men. Now I am hard-boiled. They have got to 'show me' every step of the way."

I told him the story of a certain hard-boiled banker who wears side whiskers and is the prominent citizen in a very small town. He was visiting the much younger president of a Detroit bank.

"I have just been going over my records for the past twenty years," he boasted. "How much do you think I have had to charge off as losses in all that time? Less than two thousand dollars. I call that pretty good banking."

"And I call it pretty rotten banking, if you want my opinion!" exclaimed the younger man. "It shows that you have had mighty little faith in your customers or your town. It helps to explain why your town hasn't grown a bit during those twenty years. If you had been willing to take a longer *chance* on people, you would have had more losses, but you would have made a hundred times more profit."

J. P. Morgan left two sayings that are widely remembered. He said that he had often loaned money on no other collateral than the character of the borrower, and that every man of sense must be a "bull" on the United States.

This is the philosophy that has built America—a robust belief that *most folks will make good*, and that over a period of years the *country can't go wrong*.

When you are "hard-boiled," you "look out for Number One." When you have a certain degree of faith, many other people help to look out for you. You believe in them, and when they succeed, you profit by your investment in their enterprises. You believe in your town, and as it grows, the value of your home increases. You believe in your country, whose amazing progress is a constant rebuke to all chart-makers and skeptics.

Inevitably you encounter some disappointments and incur some losses. But you have a heap more fun than the "hard-boiled," and in proportion to your resources, you make more progress.

You ride on the car that is being pushed forward by all other men's courage and faith.

AFTER



*cleanse your finer things
this safe way...for longer service*

PERHAPS in the past when your dainty things have worn out long before they had even begun to give the service you had a right to expect of them, you have blamed it upon their material or the washing or the soap, when all the time the trouble lay with the acid action of perspiration.

Many women have now discovered the dangers of leaving delicate garments with even a hint of moisture in them. They use a simple means to prevent risk.

They tub their silks and woollens in Ivory suds as soon as possible after they are worn. They NEVER put them aside and leave them soiled, either in a closet or hamper.

This quick Ivory tubbing is very simple. To make Ivory suds you may use either the cakes or the flakes. Ivory Flakes is quicker because it dissolves instantly and you have suds in a second.

Of course, with any soap less pure and safe than Ivory, you might have to think twice before risking your delicate silks and woollens in such frequent tubbings. But Ivory has been used for forty-six years, to cleanse and protect the complexions of millions of women, so the thought of risk with Ivory need never enter your mind if the fabric will stand the touch of pure water.

Have you ever considered this?

A great many women do their entire family washing with Ivory Soap—for their hands' sake as well as for the sake of their clothes. Why not try Ivory yourself for this purpose? You will be delighted with the results.

A conclusive safety test for garment soaps

IT is easy to determine whether or not a soap is gentle enough to be used for delicate garments.

Simply ask yourself this question: "Would I use this soap on my face?"

In the case of Ivory and Ivory Flakes your answer is instantly "Yes," because you know that for forty-six years women have protected lovely complexions by the use of Ivory Soap.

Ivory Flakes for a very special need

IF you have a particularly precious garment that will stand the touch of pure water, let us send you a sample of Ivory Flakes to wash it with. With the sample will come also a beautifully illustrated booklet, *The Care of Lovely Garments*, which is a veritable encyclopædia of laundering information. Address a postcard or letter to Section 28-LF, Dept. of Home Economics, Procter & Gamble, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Procter & Gamble



The RED BOOK Magazine

December 1925 • Volume XLVI • Number 2

KARL EDWIN HARRIMAN, *Editor*

EDGAR SISSON, *Associate Editor*

THE distinguished author of "The Salamander" and other famous novels tells here the most intriguing story he has ever written, a tale of exalted society, of great wealth and of an overwhelming vengeance.

Sealed Papers

By

Owen Johnson

Illustrated by
C. D. Williams

WHEN the second Mrs. Mandriga came into the room for the reading of her husband's will, Larry Delameter, her lawyer, to whom such scenes were no novelty, felt nevertheless that sudden thrill which only a great actor can convey by the mere authority of his entrance. She had discarded the protection of her heavy widow's veils, and her face in its soft and delicate reliefs expressed to the curiosity of the assembled company no more than that dignity and restraint which the occasion necessitated. There was in the resignation of her expression no pretense of hysterical sorrow for the husband, who had been old enough to be her grandfather, nor the slightest trace of relief that the bargain she had made seven years before had been terminated and that at the age of twenty-nine this meant liberty, youth, position and a great fortune.

She had nodded to Delameter immediately on her entrance, as though to distinguish in the hostile group one friend on whom she could count. Then with a correct formality which obviated the necessity of deception, she passed among her stepdaughters



How strangely and
terribly these two
had been matched!

and their husbands unemotionally, giving her cheeks to the women and her hands to the men.

"Mr. Schnell is not here yet?"

The voice was firm, calm. She went to the sofa by the great Henri IV fireplace, but recognizing how obviously that action separated her from the rest of the family, she beckoned to a young girl, daughter of her late husband's only son: "Louise!"



"In case my wife shall contest this will, I direct my executor to convene the family and read the contents of the sealed envelope."

The girl hesitated, arose and came uncertainly toward her. Gathering her skirts under her, she sat down stiffly on the edge of the sofa, folding her hands over her knees, rigid and staring.

"It isn't possible that the disposition of twenty millions does not excite her," thought Delameter, with his glance on the blonde impassivity of Mrs. Mandriga, whom a dozen artists had celebrated. "Unless, of course, she already knows the contents of the will."

The tension, which had risen with her entrance, became more marked as Mr. Schnell's arrival was delayed. The two men stood by the window, smoking, and chatting in low tones. The three daughters, grouped near the fireplace, kept up an intermittent conversation, forced and desultory. Occasionally the suspense betrayed itself by a sudden, involuntary raising of the voice. Each covertly observed the rest. In the vast, dimly illuminated library, the underlying cleavage of interests, hopes and appetites was so poignant that the slightest unforeseen incident might have exposed the depths of the primitive passions involved.

Lawrence Delameter meanwhile measured off the rug with

short deliberate steps. Of excellent family and abundant means, he was one of those men who at thirty still returned home at three or four o'clock in the morning and yet had the strength to work ten hours a day. Still young enough not to have satisfied all his curiosity, his profession interested him as it presented to him a succession of dramatic problems. Of all the women he had come into contact with in the varied experiences of his career, none had quite so completely left him with a total sense of mystery as the second Mrs. Mandriga. Of her marriage he knew exactly what the world knew—an obviously loveless connection, an extraordinary beauty bartered against the fortune and position of an old man past sixty and already a semi-invalid. So far, the story was commonplace. It was the loyalty with which the bargain, once concluded, had been carried out that was interesting. Never in his knowledge had there been the slightest breath of scandal. Not even the most trivial gossip had attached itself to her name; yet she had lived surrounded by men whose infatuation was openly expressed. Publicly she met the whispered gossip and the covert smiles which attend the public appearances of

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such unnatural unions, with a serenity which never appeared to be ruffled. She was acknowledged to be a great lady, one of the few exceptionally distinguished leaders of society. What it had cost her to maintain the serenity of her smile, not even Delameter knew, who knew enough, however, of the late Mr. Mandriga's despotism and eccentricities to have his suspicions.

In the paneled library with its carved beams a portrait by Sargent stood out of the semi-obscurity: Louis Mandriga at the age of fifty-seven, hovering above them with all the malice and disdain of the world that had marked the career of that master adventurer. The head was long and thin, ending in a straggling, spare beard twisted to a point, which with the heavy-lidded, thin-slitted eyes, with their half-hid, contemptuous stare, had a suggestion of the voluptuous, brutal force of a great ram. The portrait had always fascinated Delameter. Today more than ever, he felt the living presence. It affected him uneasily, almost prophetically. The day would come when he too, having exhausted the sensations of a pagan life, would come to this weariness of the senses, this final disillusionment.

Concerning Mandriga, wrecker of railroad systems, plunger and exploiter, successful gambler among a thousand, Delameter had no illusions. He numbered him among the great rascals of the day, who have created about them great lawyers, behind whom the gates of justice have always closed too late. Libertine, tyrant in his family, profligate to any girl who could momentarily awake his fancy, and yet capable of letting his only son die of deprivation in some lost hole east of Suez; fantastic, impulsive, suspicious of everyone and everything—when Delameter remembered him thus and saw underneath the portrait the silent, waiting, unrevealing mask of the young widow, it came to him suddenly how strangely and terribly they had been matched, what duels of the will and the imagination must have taken place between these two unyielding natures!

"Mr. Schnell!"

At this sudden announcement, a nervous, shifting tremor ran through the room. The two men wheeled about. The women arose hastily and hastily resumed their seats. Only Mrs. Mandriga, without abruptness or excitement, turning slowly, showed

no apparent quickening of her emotions before this messenger of Fate.

"She knows what's in the will," Delameter thought. "She knows; of course she knows. She hasn't missed that trick."

Schnell, like a figure stepped out of a print of the Victorian fifties, advanced ceremoniously, greeting each with exact and unvarying punctiliousness. Spare, perceptibly stooped, dressed in the ceremonial frock coat of another generation, he slipped about the room, active and alert, despite the stiffened joints and involuntary twitchings which occasionally betrayed his advanced age. He sat down, placed a brief-case on his knees and drew out a little key from his pocket. Seen thus, the entire head had the look of being molded in putty. The thin white hair descended into side-whiskers of the same faded white as the wrinkled cheeks and the seamed forehead. The nose was high-bridged, the eyes blue, small, faded and drawn back under the drab eyelids, while heavy creases played about the strong lines of the jaw and the grim Presbyterian lips.

FROM the moment of his entrance, every movement had been watched in the hope of detecting some expression which would give a clue to the news he had come to disclose. Mr. Schnell drew out the document, verified it by bringing it close to his eyes, laid it on his lap and coughed. The moment of drama had now arrived, a moment tensely suspended, awaited in agony, when from beyond the grave each at last would know the secret thoughts of this man who a week ago had moved among them as father or husband, capable of terrible caprices, of disinheriting a child for some unknown offense or following a whim to a grotesque conclusion.

"The Last Will and Testament of Louis Mandriga." In modulated, precise syllables, just as though he were a secretary at a board meeting, Schnell began to read. The first clauses with their ponderous, legal verbiage, enmeshing one idea in twenty dull paraphrases, dealing with the writer's instructions as to the payment of debts, funeral arrangements and attestations of competency, the appointment of executors, dragged endlessly along.

"To each of my daughters, Clara, Catherine and Julia, if they should survive me, I bequeath the sum of one million dollars.

"To each of my sons-in-law one hundred thousand dollars.

"To Louise Horton Mandriga, only surviving child of my son, Louis Francis Mandriga, I bequeath one-half of my gross estate as shall hereinafter be determined."

The young girl started to her feet, clasped her hands over her breast, and bursting into tears, fell back.

"Who would have thought it!"

"Louise gets it!"

"But then Helen—"

"How is it possible?"

Mrs. Mandriga put out her hand and laid it over the arm of her stepdaughter to calm her.

"To my wife, Helen Vare Mandriga, I bequeath the sum of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars outright on the following conditions:

"First, that for reasons known between us, she will institute no contest to my wishes as herein expressed.

"Second, that she shall signify her intention in writing within two weeks after the reading of this will to permit the probate.

"In case my wife, Helen Vare Mandriga, shall contest this will or refuse within the time specified to signify her acceptance in writing, I direct my executor to convene the family again and to read in their presence the contents of the sealed envelope, which is hereby joined to the body of this will."

The outburst of astonishment which greeted this announcement momentarily made further reading impossible.

"But he's disinherited her!"

"I never heard of such a thing!"

The young girl, clutching Mrs. Mandriga's hand, stared at her aghast.

"Oh, my dear, I am so sorry!"

In the window embrasure, the two sons-in-law discussed this new phase in whispers.

"A hell of a thing to do—she'll break the will to smithereens."

"Naturally—who wouldn't?"

"Curse his stubborn, vindictive ways! We're in for a fight that'll last five years."

"Five? Twenty. We'll be damned lucky if we live to touch a penny."

The daughters, ignorant of their fears, permitted themselves the luxury of a feigned sympathy.

"Why, Helen, what can it mean?"

"But we expected half the estate to go to you, at least half."

"My dear, it's outrageous!"

"My dear, I don't understand."

"It is rather difficult to understand, isn't it?" said Mrs. Mandriga quietly. She looked over their heads to Mr. Delameter, who was standing nonplused, staring at her, then nodded with a faint smile of nervousness or of disdain, and turning, said: "However, Mr. Schnell is here to read the will. We had better let him finish."

Mr. Schnell, in an atmosphere of tense expectation—which, however, was not rewarded by any new sensation, completed his reading and rose.

"My dear Mrs. Mandriga," he said in the same stiff and unrevealing attitude he had assumed from his entrance, "it is my regret that I should be the agent to disclose to you such unwelcome news. You will understand of course that it is simply part—an unpleasant part—of the routine of my profession."

"I am sure that it has been a very unpleasant duty," she answered with a gracious smile, "and I thank you for your explanation. You of course do not expect me to make my decision today?"

"Certainly not—and only after consultation with your counsel."

"Please wait a moment. There are one or two things I wish to say to you in private."

She waited while the family, still overwhelmed, still undecided, almost in a panic before the complications looming ahead, took their leave, mumbling vague, inconsequential sympathy.

She went over to where Mr. Delameter was standing, arms folded and frowning.

"Rather extraordinary, don't you think?"

"No man in his right mind would make such a will," he said, raising his voice for the benefit of Mr. Schnell.

"I am not surprised."

"What! Really!"

"No, not surprised. I shall of course need your advice later." She reflected a moment. "For the present I wish a few words in private with Mr. Schnell."

Each lawyer turned in involuntary disapproval.

"I prefer that Mr. Delameter should be present, madam."

"And I agree, most certainly."

"However, I am going to send you home for the present," she answered firmly. "Don't fear. It is not a question of committing myself. There are certain sides, intimate, personal sides, which necessitate a few moments' confidential conversation with Mr. Schnell."

"Still—"

"Trust me."

"It is against my judgment."

"I assure you, I have absolute confidence in Mr. Schnell's integrity and sense of justice. Go now, please. I shall call you very soon."

Mr. Delameter shrugged his shoulders, frowned and withdrew.

THE door closed; the tapestries trembled a moment and became quiet. They were alone.

"Will you sit here, Mr. Schnell?"

She placed him where the light fell full upon his face, and for a moment, while he waited for her to begin, she studied him, her hand under her chin, seeking perhaps some indication of the male in that blank impersonality, some evidence of a human weakness to which she might appeal.

"I have naturally some questions I should like to put to you."

"I understand that," he replied, inclining his head stiffly.

"To what extent are you free to answer me?"

"I am limited by my official connection as counsel to the Mandriga estate. You must understand that."

"Does that mean that you regard me as an enemy?" she asked quietly.

"As a possible adversary? Yes. My first duty, my only duty, is to defend the interest of my client as expressed in his will—"

"If I should attempt to upset it?"

"Exactly that."

"Have you any objection to telling me just what my rights are?"

The old lawyer hesitated, frowned and answered carefully:

"I can only give you the advice, madam, which will naturally occur to you—consult your own counsel."

"Mr. Schnell," she said, rising a moment to rearrange the folds of her dress, "I am going to be quite candid with you. I know enough law to know that such a will as this cannot stand a

f." Mrs. ter, h a ow- let ch, his un- my un- ply she ex- ci- l." ish ed, ook ms id, " in " m- es, th in- ou w. de- or n, he an " ne ed ty is ts ly ls w a



"If you don't realize the gravity of your present position, don't come to me for advice."

moment if I decide to contest it. But there is something deeper than just the question of money or the injustice done to me, and this concerns you, too. You must protect not only the estate but also the good name of my husband. It is your duty to see that no scandal should be attached to his name, and at present we are close to a very ugly scandal. You understand me perfectly, don't you?"

"Perfectly."

He inclined his head; then he drew back again stiffly, as though drawing himself up on his guard for the attack he felt preparing. "That is why I am going to ask you to drop all reserve for a moment," she said, with an expression of frankness and dignity that would have become a young girl, "and discuss this extraordinary situation without suspicion, without animosity, with only a desire to find out what's best for all concerned. Oh, I know your answer," she added quickly, as he started to object. "But whatever is said here is said in confidence between us two. Besides, we are without witnesses. Afterward each of us is free to deny anything that is said here."

"Mrs. Mandriga, what you ask is difficult—difficult and delicate. I shall have to be guided by the circumstances as they arise."

"In the first place, when was this will drawn up?"

"Two years ago on the 15th of November."

"Wait."

She appeared to reflect for a long moment, seeking in her memory to evoke the circumstances of that period. "Was there no addition later?"

"The codicil and the sealed letter

were added under the date of February 10th."

"Of the next year?"

"Naturally, of the next year."

"That is, three months later?"

"About three months."

"So that the will in its entirety represents Mr. Mandriga's state of mind during a period of three months, two years ago?"

"That is correct."

Again she remained in a long abstraction. Then, without warning, fastening her gaze on him, she said quietly: "You of course know the contents of that letter?"

"That, madam, is the type of question I must refuse to answer," he replied, quickly, with a promptness that showed this was the one question he had been expecting.

"Thank you."

"For what?" he took up sharply.

"Thank you for not answering me with a lie," she replied, smiling.

ing. "You are a gentleman of the old school indeed, Mr. Schnell."

"I must warn you, madam, that you make a great mistake if you interpret my answer in any other sense than as it was meant—a refusal to discuss certain aspects of this case."

She arose, went to the fireplace, took a cigarette and lit it.

"You aren't very helpful," she began at last with a trace of a smile.

"I regret it."

She came back and extended her hand. "Let me see the will again." She read it slowly, standing. "And the sealed letter?"

"Is of course in the custody of the Trust Company. The will you have is a copy."

"I may keep it?"

"Please."

"I am sorry," she said, sitting down near him, "that you are not able to talk to me more freely, Mr. Schnell. You see I am alone, in a very difficult position—quite—quite bewildered. I cannot conceive—" She paused, and with her eyes fixed on him, she repeated firmly: "I cannot conceive what possibly can be in that letter."

Schnell inclined his head, but even the keenness of her glance was unable to detect a change of expression.

"I do not need to tell you, Mr. Schnell, that he was a very strange—at times an incomprehensible man. I, who lived with him and studied him, never thoroughly understood him. At the bottom of his nature,—oh, he was kind, generous, lavishly generous in his way,—but at the bottom there was a terrifying streak of cruelty, an unreasoning, deliberate impulse to enjoy the harm, as well as the good, his money could cause. You remember under what circumstances he allowed his only son to die penniless and an outcast because of one moment of insubordination."

"Mrs. Mandriga, my relations were never more than strictly professional—"

"Then you don't know the contents of the letter!" she exclaimed eagerly. "No, no, don't be offended! I would so much rather you didn't know! For then—then I could discuss with you freely the dreadful dilemma in which I am placed. Please—sit down again—I shall not refer any more to it."

Schnell had arisen, firmly decided to end an interview which professionally he felt he should never have accorded; but the appeal in her voice, the pressure of her hand on his arm, the distress in her eyes, made such withdrawal seem needlessly ungracious. He seated himself, determined nevertheless to seize the first pretext to depart.

"Thank you," she said gently. "I appreciate the difficulty of your position. Try to see mine. There is, after all, a human side, isn't there? Now, Mr. Schnell, here is the trouble: How can I allow such a will to go uncontested without seeming to accept it as a just condemnation of myself? On the other hand, what monstrosities he may have put into that letter to overwhelm me, to crush me, as he did his own son, if I should resist him!"

For the first time, her calm gone, she spoke in a heightened tone, moving nervously about the room. Yet even in her emotion, real or assumed, she continued to study every expression of the lawyer.

"I again beg you, madam, to consult Mr. Delameter; I am sure that his advice—"

"But don't you understand how humiliating it is for me to



discuss my intimate life with another? I can do it with you, for you and I are the only ones who saw him as he was. Oh, don't deny it. I know it. I know many things that you don't suspect. I know that through your hands he made certain settlements which would not appear well in the will of a distinguished public character. You wonder how I know—he told me himself. Do you think he let me ignore a single one of his transient infidelities? Oh no; he would never allow an opportunity to escape of wounding my pride. Sane? I often doubted it. He could not love without hating at the same time, and which passion was the stronger I never knew from one day to the next. . . . Listen, Mr. Schnell." Her tone changed abruptly. "You distrust me; you are afraid of me. You are wrong. It is better to be frank with me, as I am with you. There is nothing I do not know, even to the family he has supported out West for twenty years! Don't drive me into a corner. I know too much!"

"Your position is a difficult one," replied Schnell, without, however, showing the slightest surprise at her revelations. "I regret that I am not in a position—"

"Wait. You still don't believe me. You think I suspect only. You think I am trying to draw you out. Very well. Four months ago you drew up a trust fund in the name of a certain Laura Edmonston, settling on her and her children four hundred thousand dollars. You wish me to specify other transactions?"

"Quite unnecessary, madam."

"Good. Now we are beginning to understand each other.



"Well, Mr. Schnell, after careful consideration, I have finally made my decision."

You now understand better what I mean when I speak of the scandal to be avoided—all the scandal?"

"I do."

"And you still persist in your attitude?"

"What attitude, madam?"

"But, after all," she exclaimed with one of her sudden strategic shifts, "why *should* you know the contents of that letter? Louis never would have dictated such instructions. He would write them in his own hand. But then, why not tell me that you have no knowledge—"

"Mrs. Mandriga," said Schnell, now perceiving that the whole conversation had had but one aim, to discover what he knew, "I regret to have to terminate this interview. There is absolutely nothing in any way that I can add to what has been said. Permit me to retire."

"You will regret it."

The blue eyes looked at him with again the somnolent cold glare of the feline animal, the pupils dilated.

"That's not for me to judge."

"Oh, you lawyers, you lawyers! You never take into account

the human side. You are so wrapped up in traditions and precedents that human right ceases to exist if property rights are in question."

"Possibly; but that is what we are paid for," replied Schnell, who drew himself up and bowed.

"But after all, why should I accept such a will?"

"That depends entirely upon your fear of what may be in that letter," said Schnell, with a promptness so different from his habitual reticence that it struck her forcibly.

"But what on earth can be in that letter?"

"Madam," answered Schnell, "I leave that entirely to your conscience."

Saying which, he took a step toward the door and stopped as though awaiting her permission to retire. Mrs. Mandriga remained staring at him without apparent notice of his intention until he judged it politic to recall himself to her with an admonitory cough.

"Mr. Schnell, do you know what I am wondering?" she asked with a trace of a smile. "I am wondering whether it was you or my late husband who made that last remark."

"That I leave to your own discernment," he replied. And this time, without awaiting further permission, he bowed stiffly and went out. . . .

On leaving the Mandriga mansion, Larry Delameter had gone directly to his apartment. He had an engagement for dinner, but telephoned and excused himself. (Continued on page 104)

Proven Pudding

By Samuel Merwin

WHEN Samuel Merwin isn't writing his notably attractive fiction, he is "up to his eyes," so to speak, in the rehearsals and performances of the remarkable amateur dramatic organization that has been developed in his home town, Concord, Massachusetts. The club has its own theater, and in personnel and stage equipment is entirely adequate to play anything, from a four-character comedy to "The Merchant of Venice."

Illustrated by Lester Ralph

The Story So Far:

YOUTH and its rebellion—New York's Greenwich Village: Lou and Bee were sharing a tiny apartment and were living their own lives with a vengeance—and a difference. For Bee, who was a chorus girl about to lose her job, was steadfastly refusing the conventional and advantageous marriage which successful young Fred Kendall urged upon her. But Lou, the capable business girl, had an "arrangement" with Leslie Perkins, who sang in "The Gondoliers"—a sort of trial-marriage affair.

And now to this ménage came two other young flames of revolt: one was Wilbur Sayles, who had been dominated by his vampire mother to the point of spiritual extinction, and whom maternal-minded Lou was striving to rescue. The other was quaint little Delia Bradley, an old-home-town friend of Bee's, something of a poetess, who had fled provincialism and had come to learn the gospel of freedom as preached in Washington Square.

The girls took in both waifs. That night there was a party, with synthetic gin and the other adjuncts of 1925 Bohemia. And to the party came one Arthur Rockwell, a romantic figure of a poet who had been one of pretty Delia's distant adorations. . . . When the party was over, she had accepted his matter-of-fact invitation to call upon him at his rooms next day. . . . If he didn't happen to be home when she first arrived, she'd find the key under the doormat. (*The story continues in detail:*)

BEE sat waiting in the corridor of a hotel near Times Square. There Fred was to find her. He would be prompt. Other girls and women were waiting in a decorous double row on Louis Quinze chairs. Broadway folk, all. Sables and silver fox and mink. Pearls and diamonds. Slim legs in cobwebby silks of flesh-color. Faint perfume. Mascara-lidded eyes glancing discreetly this way and that. Music, mellow and rhythmical, from one of the dining-rooms. Men wandering through, men with smart new gloves and walking sticks, men with masked eyes.

Bee wondered, eying the women, how many might be wearing, like herself, all they owned. Most, perhaps. For that was the New York idea, the uptown idea. She felt rather forlorn. Still, her clothes would last somehow through the spring, and autumn

would be another season. Anything might happen, any sort of luck.

Here came Fred, moving slowly along the corridor, peering from right to left. A long, gaunt man. She recalled thinking of him at first as resembling a young Lincoln: a strong, likable homeliness; a good big nose, heavy brows, generously wide mouth, full alert eyes—restless eyes. Those weren't Lincoln's. She rose and smiled. How well he dressed! He had been a captain in the Aviation Corps, had fought in France, over the German lines. After the war he had floundered,—she knew the story of that grim struggle for adjustment to the inglorious wars of peace,—to strike his gait at last in a downtown bond-house. He was getting on now, Fred was. It must be pleasant to get on.

"Come along," he said in his brusque way, those full eyes taking in her trim person. "I've got a taxi waiting. You sure do look good to me!"

She walked out at his side. A box lying on the seat of the taxi caught her glance as she entered. He lifted it to make room for himself, and then placed it in her lap.

"Fred, what have you been up to!" She opened the box. Orchids! Her spirits sank lower. "You simply mustn't do these things!"

"I haven't seen you for months, Bee. Can't I indulge myself at all?"

Soberly she pinned them on. Had he read her telephoned appeal as a measure of capitulation? Probably. Fred wasn't very modern. Of the easy *camaraderie* of the Village he knew next to nothing. He wasn't that kind. She hoped he wouldn't suddenly kiss her. He might. There was a somber light in those restless eyes. He wasn't altogether a friend—more of an aggressive enemy in the oldest warfare known to the race. She moved defensively over to the farthest corner of the seat. But he appeared content with her hand. She'd seen him on his good behavior before. It never lasted long. Men were so absurdly transparent! Children! But they were male, too. Always male. The thought, in her present mood, was repellent. Did they really believe, all of them, that all women were just waiting around to be made love to? Apparently they believed just that. She suppressed a sigh. That wouldn't do. She must everlastingly keep up. She glanced down at the orchids, touched them lightly.

"They're lovely, Fred."

"Give me half a leave and I'll smother you in 'em, Bee."

Not so good, as an opening. She averted her face and looked at the thronging traffic of the Square.

He, studying her, changed his song. Was he reconsidering his tactical approach? Probably. He'd think in such terms.

"Feeling pulled down, Bee?"

"Why, perhaps a little tired." She quietly added: "There was a crowd in last night. They stayed late. I didn't get much sleep."

"You're still doing that chorus stuff?"

She nodded. "But I'm leaving."

"Glad to hear that. It's no job for you. What next?"

"Oh, I'm working it out. Been around today to see several of the managers."

"That treadmill, eh?"

She nodded—and smiled rather forlornly.

"Here we are!" He helped her out. "I took it on myself



He caught her shoulders. "You know you're lying, Bee. I'm coming around after the show."

to order for you, Bee. For six-fifteen. So you won't feel hurried." A head-waiter tucked them away in a dim cubbyhole with high-backed yellow benches, and a moment later brought cocktails. Bee pursed her lips. "Do you good," said Fred. "What you need."

"I've just about gone on the wagon."

"Have you?" He smiled. His glass was already empty. She sipped a little. Fresh cocktails suddenly appeared. "My word, Fred!" she protested.

"Surely you can drink two, Bee!"

"Not tonight, thanks."

"Oh, come!"

"No. It'll have to be three for you, Fred." She was brightening somewhat. And thinking, with more of her usual vivid humor. The orchids must have come to six or eight dollars, at least. Four cocktails at seventy-five cents made three dollars more. And they hadn't even begun to eat. Fred was certainly out to make an occasion for the brief hour and a half she had given him! Three empty glasses stood by his place now. And he was amusing about it. Not much touched. But wasn't this free drinking a bit of a departure? Oysters came. He remem-

bered that she liked cocktail sauce. A steak followed—and artichokes; she adored them. Other dishes. And champagne in a silvery bucket, just as in the free old days. They certainly took the law lightly in this section of town.

"Fred, you're simply terrible!" said she. "You should have asked me. I honestly don't want it."

"You can sip a little," said he, with a touch of impatience.

"But you're so extravagant!"

"Why not? I'm making more money than I can spend on myself."

"Things are going well, Fred?"

He nodded. "Rather big. I'm leaving Key and Westrum."

"Not really?"

"Yes. A couple of brand new openings turned up. K. and W. offered me the Chicago office, but it wasn't good enough. I go in next week as vice-president and general manager of Aero Accessories. New company. We control a good list of patents. A mighty good list. And there's plenty of money behind us. You'd jump if I told you certain names."

"Why Fred, how wonderful!"

"Queer situation—" Moodily he eyed her. "I've been living

"For all I can see," Bee
mused, with a faint smile,
"it's not so easy to go
wrong on Broadway."

through a bit of hell. Oh, yes, it's you! The old weakness. I've felt reckless—haven't cared. I don't suppose I've even tried. And yet here I am, swept right up on the top of the wave. Big people, you know. On velvet. And I don't care a damn. Not one damn." He was leaning forward, speaking in a vibrant low voice. The full eyes seemed to go through her. She was fighting off panic; but he needn't know that. "If I could have a home somewhere out of town, with you in it to come home to at night, I'd be happy running a corner grocery."

"I mustn't forget what really brought me here. Fred. You see, an old college chum of mine, Delia Bradley, turned up yesterday. I've got to find a job for her. I know it's a nuisance to bother you about a thing like that, but I must break through with it somewhere. Secretarial work. Plenty of experience up in Worcester. A college education. Publishes verse in good magazines. A dreamer, but intelligent. Shy. Puritan inhibitions and all."

He scribbled a name on a card and tossed it across the table. "Have her see him tomorrow. Mr. Lane. Refer to me. Ought to be something for her in Aero Accessories. College education, eh! Maybe she can actually spell. Wouldn't that be great!"

"Would it?" Bee began to believe that she had headed him around nicely.

"And punctuate! Be corking if she could punctuate! You don't know the queer fruit of the business schools that we have to put up with in New York."

"I can tell you a lot more about Delia, Fred. She's really—"

He wasn't listening, but sipped a fresh glass of the wine and stared up at an exotic mural painting in greens, purples, blues, yellows and crashing reds. The business was over almost before she had begun it. Delia was to see Mr. Lane. That was that. She turned the thin-stemmed glass in her small fingers. She was by no means clear of that panic. Not yet. There was dominant strength in Fred. And he was, of course, an old duck. All of that. But—he was lighting a cigar, meditatively. In a minute he'd pounce. Didn't she know? He followed the smoke with his eyes. Then, absently, he produced a silver flask. She saw now that the waiter had brought liquor glasses. Fred was filling them.

The first thing that came into her head to say was: "Fred, aren't you—well, really drinking quite a lot?" So she said it.

But he dismissed this thought as easily and utterly as he had dismissed the little matter of Delia. "More than I used to, yes. But only after hours, never during the day. I told you I've felt reckless. That's so. Nights are the lonely time. But there's not the slightest danger of my overdoing it, if that's what's on your mind. Marry me, and I'll quit now. Say the word, Bee—" He had his glass up; she had pushed hers away. "Say you'll marry me within a year, and I'll pour this into the ice-bucket."



He watched her for a sign. She couldn't give it. "All right, then; I'll pour it into myself." Which he did.

Bee's lips drew more tightly together. She was stirred, and a little hurt, as well. She thought him not quite fair. Or was all fair?

"I've told you exactly how I feel, Fred."

"No, you haven't." He was smiling a little, and slowly shaking his head. "No—you—haven't!"

"But I have, Fred! I've tried to make you see—"

"Oh, you've tried, fair enough. I'm not questioning your honesty, child! Only your intelligence."

"Well, that's rather—"

"How could you tell me exactly how you feel? That's nonsense, of course."

"It isn't nonsense, Fred."

"Certainly it is. All you've told me is what you will or won't make up your mind to do. We've had a few moderately intimate



moments, you and I. You must have felt all sorts of things. I'm sure I have."

"Why, naturally, in that sense—"

"Surely you have moods."

"Of course, Fred."

"Funny business. I'd like to know what the devil it's all about. Really, I mean. We'll say I'm in love with you. I am, of course. Crazy about you. The thought of you excites me, stirs a desire to possess you. Shut you away. I want to slave for you. I have frightfully extravagant thoughts about that. In behind the necktie I'm a regular feudal knight, burning with chivalry. High thoughts. All that. Then when you turn me down, as you've done at pretty regular intervals for a year or more, I go berserk. I almost hate you for a while. I even feel an impulse to fight you through other women. I quite understand why men go really wild with what is called 'love' and murder the fair one. There've been moments when I could have

important things are batiks and samovars and little poems."

"Art is pretty important, Fred."

"Oh, sure!"

"You can't have a civilization without it. Without the spirit of it. The final fine flower of business appears to be the Rotary."

"That's partly true—only partly. But I didn't set out really to start a silly argument, Bee. I'm groping around in my mind. Here I am, crazy about you."

"Now please, Fred—"

"Oh, don't worry. I'm thinking it out. Trying to. I've about come to the conclusion that the individual doesn't matter a damn, except as he contributes service. What's a woman's greatest gift? Isn't it mothering?"

"But Fred, this isn't 1880!"

"Well, isn't it? Mothering young citizens. Mothering a man. Isn't it the one thing she can do that a man can't? Isn't it the finest thing in life?"

murdered you. Apparently it's not normal."

"Exactly! That's what I—"

But he pressed on to finish: "It's the upsetting old instinct that's put there to keep the race alive, regardless. We're nothing but victims of its ravages. We're nothing! Walk through Times Square any night and look at the faces. Thousands and thousands of 'em. Human critters. Some of 'em educated, whatever that is! Some of 'em even well-bred. But what are they thinking about? All of 'em, what are they thinking? Just one thing. She's thinking about him, and he's thinking about her. Or at least about them!"

"At least, Fred, you can understand why I won't let my life be governed by my nerve-centers—where the moods come from."

"Can you help it? Can any of us help it?"

"If I didn't think so," Bee answered, "I'd go back home tonight."

"I wonder. You folks down there in the Village seem to go about life on the basis that the individual—the little separate ego—is important."

"Isn't he?"

"I rather think not. He didn't seem very important in the war."

"Oh, the war—"

"And he doesn't seem so damn' important in business."

"But business—"

"Business, dear Bee, is the form the human struggle for survival takes at present. It's Life. It's exactly Life."

"A pretty low form."

"Perhaps. Perhaps not. Rather a big thing to generalize about off-hand. Oh,"—he lifted a firm hand,—"I know the quaint jargon of the Village. The

Somewhat nervously Bee hummed the concluding line of a song that had amused them all—"Don't swat your mother. It's mean."

"Oh," said he, "of course all that primitive, elemental truth is laughed out of the Village. Let's say that I'm Victorian. I don't care what they call me. Take you, now: Here you are, in the twenties, healthy, charming, all equipped to function as a normal woman. But you insist on running off after false gods. If you had an overmastering talent tearing you to pieces, that would be one thing. Honest, Bee, I don't know that you've got this talent at all. The talent I know you have is for womanhood. But you're kicking that aside."

"I don't know quite where this gets us," said she slowly. The drinks had certainly opened him up. He was disturbing, but pretty interesting. The primitive forces he dwelt on were in him, strongly: in those keen, swimming dark eyes and in the restrained but resonant voice. "There's no use in my contradicting that. But there's something in fighting battles, isn't there? And in winning them?"

"Not if they aren't your proper battles."

"Who's to say?"

"I'm trying to." He smiled nervously. That brought a bit of relief.

"Like most arguments," she observed, smiling back at him, "it appears to come down to a question of what I think and what you think. I'm sorry to say that I've got to run, Fred. I'll walk over to the subway."

"You'll do nothing of the sort."

"But, Fred, I really want the exercise."

"Nothing doing! Look here, Bee, I'm going to get down to brass tacks. I'm in a queer fix, really. Riding the big wave. Money coming easy. A big-time future ahead. And yet the whole damn thing's as empty as a shell. I simply don't react to it. I'm empty, hollow. My imagination's set on a little girl that's got her mind set on fighting the world independently. Sometimes I think it may prove too much for me. I may just blow up. Throw cheap women at you. Go to hell, maybe. I don't know."

Her eyes filled. She laid an impulsive hand on his. "Fred, I am trying to be honest. I'm fond of you. There isn't anybody else. But I just can't see this your way. If I ever do give myself to a man—"

"Oh, you will!"

"I may. Probably. One of these days. But when and if I do, it will be because I've found a man who can take me as a comrade. A man I can work side by side with."

He laughed shortly, then looked straight into her eyes and shook his head. "How in hell do you know what you'll do, when and if?" said he. "Why, bless your heart, Bee, the trouble with you is you've completely lost your sense of humor! Look here: I want you, and I'd take you on any terms. Any at all! If you want marry, if you don't care for homes and suburbs and the family thing, how about—like Lou and Leslie Perkins?"

"Oh, no, Fred! No! I won't do that!"

"Why not?"

"I couldn't. Lou and I are two very different girls. Come, Fred; I really haven't another minute!"

"All right. There'll be a taxi at the door. I've already ordered it."

"You're always thoughtful, Fred." She was a little afraid of that taxi.

And she had reason to be. He took her deliberately in his arms. She struggled, but was helpless. With a strong hand he tipped the little round face up to his. "Don't be afraid, Bee. You're in no real danger. But you've set me thinking. I'm going to kiss you—"

"No!"

"—in a minute, after I've said what I'm going to say—"

"It won't be me!"

"Oh yes, it will! You and me. Us! Listen: I'm not going to be chivalrous any longer. That's all foolishness. I don't think I'm the type. Too headlong. From now on I'm going to put up a real fight for you. Keep right after you every day. As I said, I'd take you on any terms, Bee. The best terms I could get. But what I want is marriage, home, children—complete. It's plain I can make money enough. Damn it, Bee, I'm a success, I tell you! Will you marry me?"

"Please let me go!"

"Will you marry me?"

42



"Fred, the blunt truth is, you're not thrilling me at all."

"That's not the truth. That's a lie. Will you marry me?"

"No."

"All right." He was looking straight into her eyes. "I'm going to kiss you—"

"No."

"Listen to me! Oh, it's no good dodging—"

"Of course, you're stronger than I am—muscle—"

"Exactly. Muscles. I'm using 'em."

"It isn't fair."

"Why isn't it? I'm not asking favors now. I'm declaring war. I love you, or whatever it is. Certainly I want you. I want you so much that my life's a mess. Everything's in the air. I'm through waiting around and being good. I'm going to put up a fight now. You'll hear from me. There won't be a day pass. Letters and flowers and everything. If you refuse to see me, at least you can't stop my reminding you that I'm crazy about you. I'm going to lay siege, mine and sap, bomb you from the air, with the postman's help—everything. Keep it up until you surrender. And you will surrender."

"No."

"Oh, to somebody. And it may as well be me."

"To nobody, Fred. Surrendering is precisely what I want to do."

"That's all rot. You're a girl. And the business of a girl is to become a woman. Oh, I know all about this modern stuff."

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"Oh, Bee, are you
working here?
How interesting!"

Independence—competing with men. Oh, yes! But it's bunk. Childishness. The man roams and fights. The woman bears children and gives the best in her to rearing them—unless the race is going plumb to hell, that is. So why not admit the truth, first as last. Put your heart and back into the real job. Damn it, Bee, I'm foot-loose and I don't like it. It isn't good for me. I want to be harnessed. I want somebody to fight for. I'm just a plain—"

"Fred, let me go!"

"No." She struggled, but he caught her chin again in his bony, strong hand, pulled it upward, and firmly pressed a kiss on her mouth. "There! Can you tell me you're not thrilled now?"

She drew away and looked straight up at him. Her color was high, her eyes flashing.

"Haven't I gained a little ground, Bee?"

"You've lost ground."

He caught her shoulders and shook her. "You know you're lying, Bee. I'm coming around after the show. Be waiting for you."

The taxi stopped. Here was Sheridan Square, and the red-brick theater, and the first groups of the evening crowd moving along the sidewalk. She wrenched her shoulders from his grasp, slipped like an agile boy out of the cab, and darted into the passage that led to the stage entrance. Two short words came snapping over her shoulder. They sounded like: "You needn't!"

"Where to, sir?"

Slowly Fred's eyes came to a focus on the chauffeur, standing there on the curb, holding the door open.

"I don't know, Bill. Hell, I guess."

The man bent down to look at something on the step, then picked it up. It was a crushed bouquet of orchids. He didn't smile.

"I'll take it," Fred remarked shortly. "Go along."

The man slammed the door, climbed to his seat, then turned his head. "I didn't quite get that address, sir," he said.

"Oh—uptown!"

Chapter Seven

ROWS of baby spot-lights flaring down overhead, amber, green, rose and blue. Draperies extending far upward into lofty mysterious shadows. Hanging sand-bags up there, and dim, painted flats. Property men shoving into place the throne of the two gondolier kings. Scene-handlers giving a final twist to stage screws. Electricians casually plugging in cables. The assistant stage-manager hurrying by, calling: "Second act! Places, please!" Fiddles, out beyond the bellying curtains, tuning scrapily against a murmurous tonal background of human voices.

The girls of the chorus weren't on at (Continued on page 126)



"You haven't changed. Hardly a pound heavier, are you?"

Scrub

Illustrated by
O. J. Gatter

By Lawrence Perry

Material

GORMUS HOAG, president of the Tar Heel Mills, paused diffidently at the threshold of the reception-room in the towering office suite of Dodge and Company on lower Broadway.

Four men of varying type and personality, but all one in the outgiving of a general impression of authoritativeness and well-being, greeted him cordially. Smiling, as though reassured, Hoag stepped into the room. Just verging out of middle-age, he retained a stalwart, youthful figure. His face was deeply lined, rugged, yet sensitive, a quality chiefly marked by mobile lips that were somewhat thin.

"Well, Hoag, we're here together at last. The deal's going over, and it will be the best thing we ever did."

Theodore Gormeley of the Pawsocket Mills advanced to the man, rubbing his hands. A dominant man, Gormeley, thick-set, aggressive.

"I think so," Hoag nodded. "I certainly hope so." He turned to the other three mill-owners, all of whom he had met individually at various times, raising his eyebrows inquiringly. "Then Dodge has agreed?"

No one writes with greater authority on amateur sports—football, yachting, polo or tennis—than Mr. Perry; perhaps another reason for the success of his stories against a background of these sports is the fact that he always links the game with human life on the wider field and gridiron of the world and its affairs. This he accomplishes with great effect in the present story of an old football player and his son.

"That's what we're here to find out." Stephen Prime shook his head doggedly. "If he doesn't, we'll find some one who will." Prime controlled the Brandywine Mills in Pennsylvania, which ranked with the Pawsocket Mills in size and output. These two mills were the largest represented at this meeting. Then came the Tar Heel Mills, and then in order the Pequot Mills, owned

by Milo Hapgood, and the Passaic-Essex Mills, of which William Randolph was president.

After a long period of correspondence and subsequent conferences among the mill-owners, Hoag excepted, the decision to amalgamate had been reached. Hoag, who throughout most of the preliminary stages had demurred to all approaches designed to include him in the group, had at length seen his way clear to fall in with the project.

This fact alone had served to give him a certain prestige with his colleagues. Besides, the Tar Heel Mills were everywhere known as a well-organized, thorough-going concern, safely progressive, sound, reliable, tight as a drum.

Gormeley cleared his throat.

"Now, as to the man who's going to run us—"

Milo Hapgood interrupted:

"No need to discuss that now. That is to be left to Mr. Dodge, or whatever banker will take the job of amalgamating us."

"I know, Hapgood, but—"

Again Gormeley was interrupted, this time by Daniel Dodge's secretary, who announced that the great financier was ready to receive the visitors.

Dodge rose from his desk as the mill-owners entered. He was a tall, thin man with seamed, russet-hued face, smooth-shaven. His cheek-bones were high, his eyebrows beetling. His grizzled hair ended above the temples; every aspect, indeed, every move he made, suggested great keenness and a sort of lancing energy.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen. Wont—" At the moment Hoag,

various chairs. "I beg your pardon, gentlemen—wont you sit down? I was somewhat taken out of myself at seeing Hoag among you."

As the visitors stared at the great banker, he turned again to Hoag, pushing the man backward to arm's-length, surveying him with kindling eyes.

"You hav'n't changed. Hardly a pound heavier, are you? Gray, yes. But look at me! Well—well!"

"You see, gentlemen,"—Dodge smiled at the other mill-owners, who had seated themselves and were gazing awkwardly from him to Hoag, who, indeed, seemed a bit embarrassed himself,—"Hoag and I played football on the same varsity eleven back in the nineties."

"The golden nineties' they call them now." A far-away expression settled upon Hoag's face as though in melancholy fancy he were once more walking beneath the elms and ivied walls of his college. "And they were gold, I reckon." There was a soft note in his Southern drawl.

"Right—all gold." Dodge took off his eyeglasses, polishing them slowly. And his keen dark eyes were soft. "Hoag, I don't know why I didn't catch your name among this group. It seems very stupid of me."

"That," explained Hoag, "is perhaps because I'm a ninth-hour entry, sir."

"That's it, of course. You must dine with me tonight, Gumbo. But that's personal. We've important business in front of us." Dodge's manner became crisp. He went to his desk,



who had delayed an instant in the hall, came, perhaps with some diffidence, into the room. With a little exclamation the banker left his desk.

"Well, 'Gumbo!' This is extraordinary!" Ignoring Hoag's outstretched hand, he seized the mill-owner by both shoulders, shaking him with more than a suggestion of joviality. And this was an astonishing spectacle in one reputedly so cold, so incisive, so relentless.

"I—George, Gumbo! I didn't realize you were one of this crowd. You weren't at the first conference, you know. Of course I should have—" As though recalling his duty as host, he turned to the other men, gesturing about the room toward

"I'm indebted to you, Mr. Hoag," she said. "Daniel has been quite taken out of himself."

bent over it, gazing down at some papers spread upon the blotter, then sat down, swiveling his chair so that he could look out upon the towering spires and roofs.

Then after a reflective moment or two, he swung around, facing his visitors, who were watching him not without eagerness; for of all financiers available, Dodge was by all odds the outstanding man to make their project successful.

"I'm a pretty busy man," Dodge picked up a paper-cutter, balancing it upon his fingers. "When you came in, I had about decided—not fully—but had about decided it was not feasible at this time for me to undertake this amalgamation. Not that you haven't a remarkably fine outlook. You have—extraordinary. None the less, all things considered, it is a bad time for me."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Dodge," Gormeley's voice revealed his chagrin. Dodge nodded reassuringly.

"As I say, I had not fully decided. But now that I find my old varsity captain included in your group, my decision is made. I am disposed to undertake what you wish me to do."

"Good!" Gormeley's voice rose above a little flutter of hand-clapping. Dodge raised his hand.

"I have gone over the various data you left with me, Mr. Gormeley; the way seems quite clear." The banker glanced over a typewritten memorandum. "And you seem to have allocated the various outstanding qualifications of each member of this group quite clearly and impartially—except," he added, "Hoag—"

"Mr. Hoag was not with us when the list was made up," interjected Prime. "But I think none of us will dispute the fact, aside from his being a Southerner, that no man in the country is better qualified as a purchaser of raw material."

"Good enough," Dodge gestured. "And you, Mr. Prime, seem to have the vote as expert in the technical management of plants. So it goes. The amalgamation will find you all importantly placed—and therein indispensable." A cold smile lightened the banker's eyes. "Of course you understand I have taken advisement upon this."

"Naturally." Randolph's voice, nevertheless, was stiff. Dodge darted a quick, slightly amused glance at the man, and then swiveled again toward the window.

"I am to be invested with full powers under these terms," he said at length. "Among other things, the appointment of the chairman of your board will be in my hands."

"Yes," remarked Gormeley; "and, as you know, that is most important."

"I apprehend that clearly. I shall have to have time on that matter. At least, nothing can be done today." He picked up a mass of papers and began to assort them, ringing for his private stenographer when he had finished. "Now, let's get to work."

When the long conference ended, the October dusk had fallen and lights were punctuating the upper strata of the Broadway cañon.

"Very good." Dodge sat back in his chair. "It's understood, then, we meet here at the same hour day after tomorrow."

"Thank you very much." Gormeley shook hands with the banker. "I think at least you understand now the sincerity of our cooperative spirit."

"Perfectly, perfectly," Dodge smiled slightly. "It is clear to you that we are launching an enterprise of vast power; naturally you would not permit petty pride or selfishness to intrude. Your original conception was too big to admit of that. But this project will be even greater than you think, materially to the advantage of all of you."

"We think so, indeed," Gormeley hesitated, then glanced curiously at the banker. "Have you any idea your mind will be made up as to our chairman when we next meet?"

Dodge replied shortly:

"Perhaps—possibly. We'll see." He gestured toward Hoag. "Wait behind a moment, will you, Hoag? You and I are going to have a night of old-fashioned football bicker."

Hoag nodded and then bade good-night to his colleagues with something of self-conscious constraint which was not eased by Gormeley's laughing injunction that the banker take it upon his conscience not to permit his old football association with Hoag to influence him with regard to the chairmanship.

Dodge glanced at the man with a wintry smile.

"I understand," he said, "that we are not organizing a football eleven. Good-evening, gentlemen."

It became clear to Hoag in the course of their ride on the elevated to Bleecker Street, and their brisk walk thence up the avenue to Dodge's home, that the one real touch this man of cold finance, this intellectual machine, had with throbbing human life was his memory of the old football days.

Obviously Dodge's office staff stood in awe of him. The butler opened the door of his home, not with a furtive air, but certainly with a manner that betokened the utmost caution in every phase of demeanor, in every word he spoke. Even Dodge's wife, waiting down the hallway at the entrance to the drawing-room,

seemed surprised at the lightness of his mood. At least Hoag gathered this from the effort she obviously made to alter an attitude—probably customary, Hoag decided—of faintly smiling formality to one better adapted to a manner of home-coming evidently unusual.

Yet this manner of grim coldness

had not been uncharacteristic of the man even in his college days. Respected for his qualities of character, he had formed few, if any, real friendships. Hoag himself, who had been his roommate,—an accidental association at the outset,—had never been sensible of any vital human bond between them.

As he had seen it then and saw it now, their enthusiasm for football had been their one compelling nexus. Hoag was a brilliant tackle, an All-American player without dissent anywhere—four years on the varsity and captain in his senior year.

Dodge had begun on the scrub as a



The interference and the man with the ball trampled over the prostrate body and went on.



"Just one minute, please."
Hoag went to the boy,
facing the man who held
his destiny in his hands.

freshman, an end, and not until the last great game, when he had become a senior, had he won his varsity letter. And Hoag had not the slightest doubt that the qualities this silent, unemotional man had displayed year after year in his fight for a varsity position underlay all he had subsequently accomplished with his life.

Game, self-sacrificing; in determination unflagging, no matter what discouragements beset him; in courage undaunted; never complaining when players better qualified were set above him, ever ready to recognize the higher interests of the team and of the university it represented—Daniel Dodge had ever exemplified the very best that rugged competitive sport brings out in a man.

Not heavy, tall, he had none the less a steely resiliency; when he struck, he struck with all of him, and he was very fleet of foot. But a proneness to be misled by elusive ball-carriers had kept him on the scrub, and it was not until Hoag, as captain, had elevated him to the varsity in the last season either would know as undergraduate football-players that the man had the long-awaited opportunity to win his letter.

It had meant a great deal to Dodge. In fact, as Hoag recalled, his reserve had been penetrated for the first—and last—time. The effect must have been extraordinary. He had very nearly broken down, indeed, had broken down to the extent of baring his soul to his friend and captain, as he spoke of the long fight he had made, a fight waged long after hope had departed and he was merely carrying on because it was in him to fight to the end for what he wanted.

The matter had never been mentioned again, and after graduation the two men had separated. But now, so far at least as Dodge was concerned, it was as though hardly a year, certainly not thirty-odd years, had elapsed since the two were boys together.

Dodge had become a very great man, internationally great, and Hoag himself had succeeded in life in a smaller way; but most obviously it was not what either had done or had not done since college days that was filling the banker's mind now and moving him to unwonted enthusiasm and friendliness. It was that happening more than thirty years ago, on a football gridiron.

In sooth, Dodge admitted this when coffee and cigars and liqueurs were served at the end of a dinner whose stately formality

of service and luxury of environment seemed not at all in keeping with the prevailing character of conversation, which was all football, and in tone not a little undergraduate.

"Gumbo," he said, nodding at his wife, who throughout had been sitting with a fixed smile of mild wonderment, "when I left college, I entered upon pretty much of a dog-eat-dog life. That's the way it has been ever since. You could have kept me on the scrub. I know Beef Bronson, who was coaching us mainly, wanted me kept there. You took a chance on me. That was friendship. I've never forgotten it, Gumbo. As the years have gone on, it has bulked bigger."

Hoag smiled vacantly. Try as he would, he could not dissociate his host—as Dodge apparently so successfully had done—from his function as organizer of this amalgamation of cotton mills.

It would be a signal honor were he to be named as chairman, and he desired it more than he had ever desired anything. As for his colleagues, temporarily at least, his rivals, he had praised each one with the broadest impartiality, and certainly from a technical standpoint he could not see where relatively he was lacking in any way, could even discern points where the advantage lay with him. Sunk in his thoughts, Hoag was roused by Dodge's voice, edged with a note of sharpness.

"I asked you," he said as Hoag glanced up inquiringly, "how it has been that we haven't seen each other for thirty years. You've been in New York, of course, from time to time?"

"Yes, of course." The mill-owner turned his head sidewise to accept a light from the second man. "Yes, indeed. But the last person I expected would have any time for me was Daniel Dodge." But that was not the real reason, and he knew it was not. He hurried on. "I went back to the twenty-fifth reunion of the class. You weren't there."

"No," Dodge laughed. "But let me tell you one thing: I've missed mighty few Yale games. You'll recall it was against Yale I won my letter."

"Yes," Hoag gestured with his cigar. "I've seen hardly any football games since I was graduated. Been rather out of the atmosphere."

"George!" Dodge glanced at his wife and smiled as though tacitly apologizing for his ardor. "I began to think in my senior year I was to go out into the world (Continued on page 94)

Safely Married

By
Virginia Dale

NO writer of fiction whose work first appeared in the past year has won more friends by her pointed tales of domestic life than Virginia Dale. Her uncanny insight is partly due to her experience in living in many places about the world, which makes it possible for her to perceive the essential comedy in the everyday living of everyday Americans.

MARJORIE was having her regular morning argument with herself: should she take another waffle? It seemed a shame to waste it, and she could start dieting Monday instead of today. She decided to put it up to Van, having a clear idea of what he would say.

"I oughtn't to eat any more," said Marjorie tentatively. Van looked up from his paper. "Oh, go ahead," he replied, quite as she had expected him to.

With the decision thus out of her hands, Marjorie slipped the crisp brown square to her plate and reached for the syrup pitcher.

"I'm getting fat," she remarked for the first time *that* day.

"You're all right; suit me," Van returned, loyally. Marjorie tilted the syrup pitcher a little more.

"Well, I'm going to start dieting next week—sure!" she informed him. So long as she had definitely decided to start next week, what was the harm in taking that last little curl of bacon?

"I see they're going to use concrete for that new Italian tower," Van commented, turning a page of his paper. "Wonder how long we'll keep using steel here."

"I must get coffee today," said Marjorie, thinking aloud, "and—let me see, rice. We're out of rice again, and—"

Van was immersed in his news.

"I wish you wouldn't bury yourself in your paper when I'm talking," she chided. "You're just like all the funny pictures of husbands in the morning, eating and reading and paying no attention to your wives."

"What is my 'wives' doing today?" he asked with a last look at the sporting page.

"Well, Dora's coming to tea. I've sort of grown away from Dora somehow, in the last year. We used to be good friends too. Of course we were both stenographers then, and she's gone into the selling end now, and—oh, I don't know. Dora's changed. She's dreadfully set up because she's successful."

"She's a clever little person, I guess," Van offered amiably. "Selling bonds is no joke."

"Oh, I don't know. I guess if I'd kept on working instead of marrying like I did, I could have been successful too. She makes a lot of money," she added. Van rose.



"Well, that's nice. You just hold your horses, honey. Some day your husband'll give you diamonds."

"I wish he'd hurry up and start," Marjorie replied. "Sometimes," she added, "Dora gets on my nerves with her talk of good times and her 'I have this' and 'I have that.'"

"Why do you ask her here if she bores you?" Van inquired with a man's obtuseness. "If you don't get along, why—"

"We *do* get along. She's one of my best friends. Didn't she stand up with us when we were married? She was green with envy of me that day, Van. I know it."

"And doesn't she envy you now, hon? Is that what's wrong? I'm sorry."

"I didn't say there was anything wrong." She watched him light his cigar. "Oh, that reminds me; I ought to have some cigarettes for her. She smokes like a chimney."

"Sorry I can't oblige. Would a cigar do?"

"I don't know why you won't smoke cigarettes like other men. Then I'd have some around when the girls drop in."

"I'll change my habits, my dear, when—you start dieting." He said it good-naturedly as he went for his hat and overcoat. But Marjorie straightened as if she'd been jerked by a wire.

Illustrated by
Howard Chandler Christy



Marjorie regarded her.
"You mean you go out
with married men?"
"Why not?"

She was a good house-keeper, too; not a digger like some old-fashioned women, understand, but a comfortable one. Hadn't she contrived the dressing-table herself from an old box just after reading in a magazine how it could be covered with cretonne?

"I think that's uncalled for, Van. If I don't diet, though I am going to, it's only because you say you like me this way."

"And I do," he declared as he dropped an easy kiss on the top of her head. "I'll run along now. Too bad I can't make it home for dinner tonight, but I've got to go over those Bradley plans, sure."

She followed him to the door. After all, with Dora coming, it would be a relief not to have to get a regular dinner. She could do very well herself on the remains of the company tea.

Marjorie was certain she was a good wife. Any of her friends would say as much, bright young matrons like Marjorie herself, who gathered together afternoons for cards and chatter and expanded, with feminine indulgence, on their husbands: "He wants to go off fishing on his vacation, but I said: 'Not me. We're going somewhere where I can have a good time.'" "—really, awfully easy to cook for, considering." "My dear, another? She's only been married five years! I'm glad Van feels as I do about children. An apartment's no place to raise them."

She dusted today, in preparation for Dora, where the revealing sun was likely to strike, did her ordering by telephone, and got out the best bedspread and tea-things. Five good hours stretched ahead before Dora could possibly arrive. What should she do? She didn't feel like sewing, and anyhow Van had enough whole socks without bothering to darn any; she never took the stitch in time in her own things popularly believed to save nine. She had read the "Embarrassing Moments" in the paper; there didn't seem to be much more of interest. If she only had time to read a good book! Should she call up Florence and go downtown to lunch? But if she did, she'd have to hurry home for Dora. . . . She stretched out in the wicker chair. . . .

Diamonds, Van had said. She smiled. By the time Van got round to buying her diamonds, she'd be too old to want them. What if she hadn't married him? If she hadn't, she could be like Dora now: trim, wearing expensive clothes, meeting big business men, spending her own money—spending a lot of money.

But one mustn't think of such things. One made sacrifices to

Love. Yes, she was in love with Van—that was it; and women in love just sacrificed themselves. . . . But. . . .

When it was time to put on the new *crêpe de chine*, Marjorie was at the climax of a nice case of self-pity. And the blouse part of the new dress was all wrong! It made her look positively fat! If she could have had the green dress she'd wanted, she would have looked decent. Fancy having to appear a frump because she couldn't spend ten dollars more! Dora could have what she wanted; but because *she* was married, she had to scrimp and look terrible.

SHOULD she put on the old wash silk? Dora had seen that a thousand times. Why hadn't she fixed this? It could have been taken in here, and there. . . . The bell rang.

"Take another breath and another flight," Marjorie called down to her invisible guest. Dora appeared, trig and smart in apple green. Marjorie made a brave decision not to be catty.

"How stunning you look!" said she.

Dora regarded herself complacently in the mirror. Then her eyes went to Marjorie. "So do you," she said with the air of not being outdone in magnanimity.

"Oh, this dress!" Marjorie glanced down. It looked worse than ever beside Dora's. "I haven't had time to fix it," she explained; but she couldn't quite manage the laugh that should have gone with the speech.

"Oh, do you do it yourself? I always have mine done at the shops; then I know everything's going to be exactly right."

"Well, that's very nice," Marjorie admitted, "only when there's a lot to be done, it's rather expensive." She hadn't meant to say that; no use letting Dora know she had to count pennies.

But Dora came in sweetly, "Of course I seldom have to have a thing touched," and ruffled her short, fair hair.

Dora had become so satisfied with herself. But after all, why shouldn't she? Nothing to do all day but sit in an office and always look exactly right. And if she hadn't married Van, she could be just like her!

Marjorie had out the precious *cinq-cento* tea-cloth, but Dora seemed not to notice it. "She'd have noticed, all right, if I'd used fringed napkins," thought Marjorie fiercely.

"How many lumps?" asked Marjorie over the sugar-bowl.

"Lemon, please. Oh, haven't you any? That's all right. I'll take it plain." Dora accepted her cup sweetly. "I just find it better to cut out all sugar," she explained.

Marjorie took two lumps. "I'm glad I don't have to bother," she said. "Van likes me plump."

"That's what they all say," said Dora succinctly. "Don't put him to the touch too hard."

WHY, Marjorie wondered, had she asked this impossible woman to her flat. Dora talked easily of moonlit roads, of dances, of country clubs on Sunday afternoons. "I haven't bought my own dinner for weeks," she confessed, laughing.

"I'm surprised you stayed in town for your vacation," Marjorie threw out.

"Oh, well, I have a pretty good time here; why go away?" Dora refused to be depressed. "I danced till all hours last night. Have you been to that new roadhouse, the Checkered Peach? It's on the Waukegan Road," she explained kindly.

"I don't go dancing around any more. Van doesn't like it. I'm an old married woman, you know."

"But why give in to it?" Dora demanded lightly.

And she might have been as gay as Dora, Marjorie contemplated. Antagonism for Van because of what he made her lose caught and held Marjorie.

"And how's the rising young architect?" Dora wanted to know as she played with her spoon.

"Oh, splendid. He spoke this morning of getting me a diamond." She let that sink in. "He's working awfully hard. He has several big things on hand."

"Isn't that splendid? But I suppose it leaves you pretty lonely?"

"No indeed. I have my apartment, and of course a lot of friends. It's certainly a relief not to have to rush off to an office in hot weather like this." That should make Dora sorry.

"But what on earth do you do with yourself all day?" Dora glanced about the tiny flat.

"Oh—oh, you've no idea—"

"It always strikes me so funny to see you so terribly settled. You used to be crazy about a good time."

"I am yet." The words were out before Marjorie could stop them. Well, it wasn't fair of Van. She felt suddenly that she

hadn't been fair to herself, forgetting the alacrity with which she had given up her stenographic position for marriage.

"I suppose bond-selling is as fascinating as ever?" Marjorie asked wistfully.

"I'm particularly fascinated when I get a raise, as I did just before my vacation." (She must be making as much as Van. And she could spend it all on herself!) Dora went on: "And of course I come in contact with a lot of interesting people. That man of mine in Boston says he wishes I worked for the Y. W. C. A."

They both laughed a little, Marjorie somewhat forcedly.

"Tell me about the suitors." Marjorie took a second piece of cake. What difference did it make? No one to bother about but Van. "A long list of new ones, I suppose?"

"Well—" Dora toyed with her spoon. "I do have an awfully good time," she admitted.

"You'll marry some day." Marjorie's prophecy sounded somehow lugubrious.

"Not me," said Dora. "I know too much about men."

"How do you mean?" Marjorie was interested in spite of herself. And the cake was certainly good.

"Well, I mean I'd rather be the woman men take out than the one who sits home waiting for them."

MARJORIE noticed a nick in one of her Venetian glasses. "I don't think I quite understand," she said slowly.

Dora laughed. It was a low laugh, and rather knowing. "Men are men," she said, "aren't they?"

Marjorie regarded her out of deep brown eyes. "You mean you go out with married men?"

"Why not?"

Marjorie did not answer. She knew some women did that sort of thing. But she'd never imagined "nice" girls did, certainly not any girls that she knew.

"Why not?" repeated Dora, flippantly. "I'm the sort that believes in grabbing a little bit of happiness as I go along."

"Yes, but you must know a lot of men who are—free."

"Not so many." Dora pushed back her plate. "When a woman gets along in business the way I have, she's bound to meet men higher up. They're nearer middle-age, aren't they? And married. The young chaps around an office who make less than I do take out the young stenogs." Her pertness dropped from her. "I like to be told pretty things," she confessed, "even if I am a successful business woman."

"And you don't care who says them?"

Dora flung back her head defiantly. "That's not fair. Yes, I care. I know these men, maybe, don't mean all the things they say. But it's pleasant anyhow, isn't it? And when it's a case of being lonely or particular—well, I'm not partial to loneliness."

A thousand thoughts were screaming in Marjorie's mind. "But what of the wives?" she wanted to cry. "What of the wives?"

The other seemed to read those thoughts. "You're thinking of the patient helpmates at home, aren't you? Oh, I know the picture: the adoring wife who rocks the cradle, and all that. Only nowadays there aren't any cradles, mostly. The wives spend their time satisfied to have a meal ticket and get fat." Marjorie pushed away her cake. "Consider the men," said Dora with the air of putting her case lucidly; "most of them need a little relief from what they get at home."

"I suppose so," said Marjorie dully. "I suppose they do." It was as if Dora had held up a mirror to her days. Her mind flew to Van. Was he really working? Or was he off with some other woman, telling her "pretty things?" She looked at the second piece of cake before her. Dora had refused pastry on behalf of her "figure." If Marjorie could have stripped off her extra pounds with a knife at that moment, she would have done it.

"If the wives worked as hard to keep their husbands as the girls without them work for their dinners, there wouldn't be any tears," Dora declared succinctly.

"Let's go in the other room," suggested Marjorie—and wondered where Van was dining tonight.

"I suppose you think I'm pretty terrible," said Dora uneasily. "Gosh! I don't know why I said all that. I don't usually go around telling my personal history."

"It's all right."

"You've got the best of it, you safely married ones, if you only knew it. You're safe. Who knows? I may go smash any day, and then—"

"And then what, Dora?"

"Get my name in the papers, I suppose. That sounds like



What would he say if she confronted him? She couldn't bear to lose him. How could he treat her so?

melodrama, doesn't it? But don't you think it's all beer and skittles for me. I don't bother about the wives, I admit. But I think sometimes of the trouble I may be storing up for myself. It's no aid to digestion to think the lawful wedded wife may pop up with the *filet mignon*."

They got off the subject then. Dora mentioned the French debt, and it developed she knew considerably about the good-roads bond-issue. Did she talk of things like this to those men who told her "pretty things?"

"Oh, have you any cigarettes?" she interrupted herself.

"I'm so sorry. I meant to get some. Van smokes only cigars, and I don't smoke at all," Marjorie fluttered. Oh, why hadn't she been more insistent that Van should come home to dinner? Would he go out with another woman—Van?

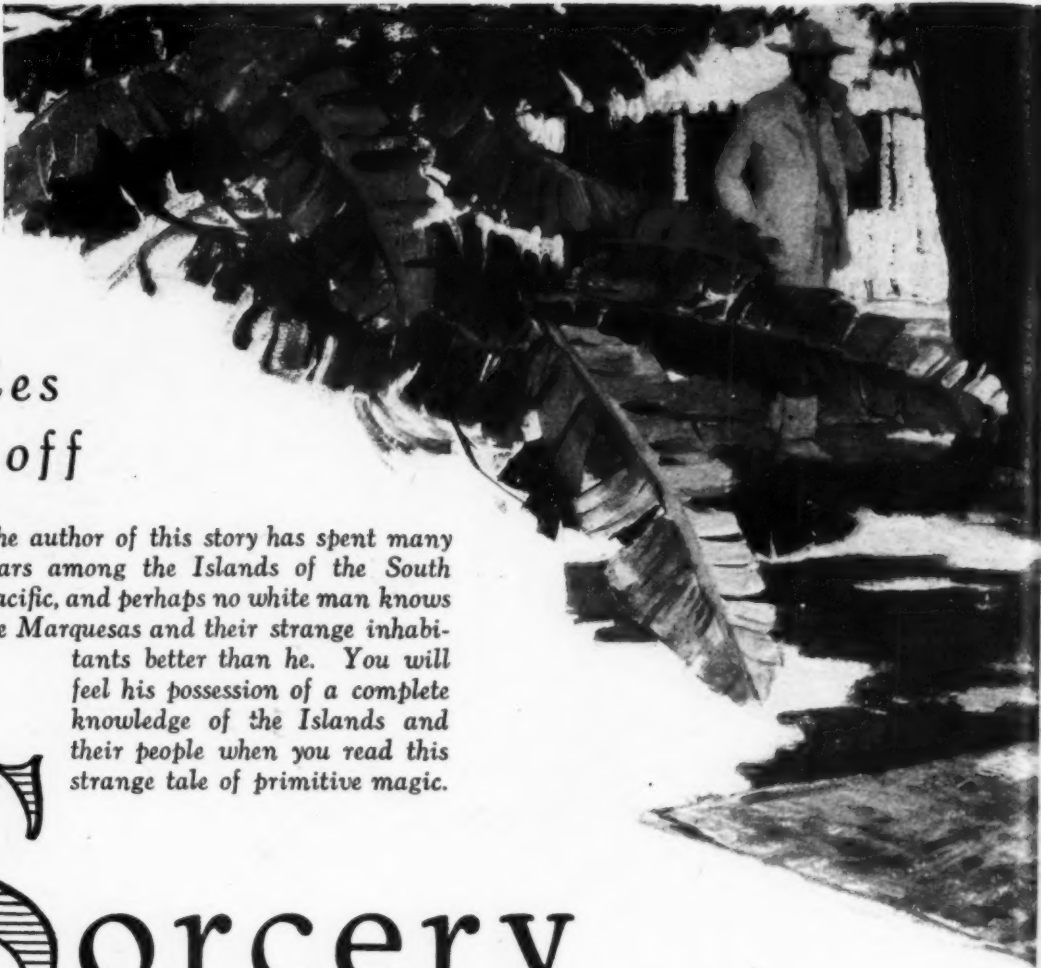
Dora left early, half mentioning an engagement and cutting

her remark uneasily. "Looks like rain," she said; "that's enough to send any joy-rider scuttling home."

Marjorie washed the tea-things, her mind a havoc. After all, what did she know of Van's evenings? He said he worked. But was she sure he did? Was he at the office this minute? It was long after six. She started bravely to the telephone. She'd see! But with the instrument in her hand, she paused. It would mean so much if he didn't answer. She wouldn't call. . . . Of course she trusted him. . . .

She hated her reflection in her mirror. She unfastened the horrid *crêpe de chine* impatiently. She looked at herself carefully. Yes, she was fat. Van said he didn't mind, but—did he?

Oh, she was going to diet sure, certain now. She'd begin tonight. She groped in her bureau drawer. The new chiffon negligée she had bought to go to (Continued on page 92)



By
**Charles
Nordhoff**

The author of this story has spent many years among the Islands of the South Pacific, and perhaps no white man knows the Marquesas and their strange inhabitants better than he. You will feel his possession of a complete knowledge of the Islands and their people when you read this strange tale of primitive magic.

Sorcery

Illustrated by R. L. Lambdin

OLD Jackson's office was a pleasant loitering-place that Saturday afternoon. A cool breeze blew across the bay from Vasa's Point. The tall French windows giving on the water-front were open, and the stir of air ruffled the papers on the trader's desk. He had been summoned downstairs to settle some question concerning the week's pay-roll—his last task for the day.

I was alone in the room—a cool, scantily furnished apartment with white walls on which hung two or three models of ships and a few photographs of old schooners, long since rotting on various lonely reefs. From my chair, pulled close to a window, I could see the street, shaded by the dense foliage of mango trees, and the strip of land between the sea-wall and the road. The masts of schooners rose above the tree-tops; there was a bustle of stevedores unloading copra and shell.

A white man was approaching the store, making his way through the crowd of natives loafing on the street. I looked more closely. Strange, I thought, here on this island where there were so few of us, that I had never seen him before. Yet he wore a hat of native make, of a kind that is not offered for sale. Perhaps he was newly arrived from some outlying group; perhaps he was impelled by poverty or by dislike of mankind to live away from the settlements, in one of the valleys of the interior. There were men of this sort on the island—hermits who were seen in town at intervals of six months or more, who purchased a few tins of salmon or beef, a little clothing, an ax or a knife, and disappeared once more in the bush.

Though the stranger walked briskly, swinging a stick, there was something forced in his air of jauntiness, and I knew that his promenade led nowhere in particular. His suit of drill was freshly

ironed, but even at that distance I could see that the edges of the coat were frayed and that the trousers had been patched. Here in the early afternoon he looked elderly and very much gone to seed; in a more subdued light he might still have passed for a handsome man. He came to a halt, glanced into the store below me, and strolled across the road to seat himself on a bench in the shade of the nearest tree. I watched him feel in his clean, ragged pockets for tobacco and a coil of pandanus-leaf. He rolled his cigarette spirally, Kanaka-fashion.

I was wondering what history of sloth or debauchery could have brought a European to such a state, when I heard the door open and Jackson's voice behind me:

"This is interesting—the supercargo of the *Tamahine* brought it down from the Marquesas."

He held out the shell of a coconut, black with age and elaborately carved in patterns beautiful and strange. "The carving tells a story," he went on; "it's the beginning of written characters, or more likely the remnant of a writing long since dead. And look!" As he held the shell up to the light, I saw that a hole had been pierced in the bottom, a hole through which a needle would scarcely pass. Jackson was enthusiastic over island antiquities.

"A great rarity!" he was saying. "The first I've come across in forty years! This is one of the bowls the old-timers used for *pifao*—sorcerer's work, you know—killing an enemy with incantations. I've some of their spells written down, and I've heard of these bowls, but I fancy there's not a museum in the world that has one! The hole in the bottom proves that this is what I've been looking for. I wonder who could help me decipher the carving. Old Tahia, perhaps—" He spoke half to himself.



"That was how Selby saw them, a few days after a schooner had landed him here."

lower, passing from convulsions to a kind of apathy which ended in death as the bowl went to the bottom of the salt pool. There were other kinds of *pifao*—you've heard how the old-time chiefs carried little wooden boxes in which the cuttings of their hair and the parings of fingernails were preserved? They believed that if an enemy got hold of the *tupu*, he had only to take it to a proper *pifao*-man, pay him something handsome in the way of hogs or a new canoe, and sit back to enjoy the other fellow's lingering death. Even today there are people said to do this sort of thing."

"It must have been suggestion," I commented. "What do you think?"

"What was *pifao*?" I asked. "How did they go about it?"

We had seated ourselves by the desk. The trader still held the coconut-shell, turning it in his hands. He was leaning back in his swivel-chair, one bony ankle on the other knee. The short, blackened pipe, protruding through his white mustache, sent off a thin trail of smoke.

"A curious business," he remarked with the pipe between his teeth. "Some of the old missionaries, who witnessed the results, declared that it was beyond their comprehension. 'A manifestation of Satan,' they called it, and cited the herd of swine, rushing into the sea. There were several ways of doing it; this method was the rarest and most difficult. Only the very superior sorcerers, fellows that were in close touch with their private devils, could do it.

"You know old Tahia, eh? A full-blooded Marquesan. She explained to me once how it was done. After certain preliminary ceremonies, the news was spread about, in an indirect, casual way, that so-and-so was being prayed to death. Waiting until the victim was so ill that it needed only a few finishing touches to do him in, the sorcerer stole down to the beach, late some dark night, and squatted by one of the pools on the fringing-reef. He set his coconut bowl, containing the *tupu*—a bit of the victim's fingernail or hair—afloat on the salt water, and began to recite the final incantation—something very secret and very powerful. It took an hour or more for the bowl to fill, through the little hole in the bottom; during this time the victim sank lower and

Jackson glanced up at me. There was a quizzical half-smile in the faded blue eyes under their shaggy brows. I knew that he had seen strange things during his forty years in the Pacific—things we are apt to label native superstition, and dismiss with a casual finality from our minds.

The old man answered my question with one of his own:

"Ever know Selby?" I shook my head.

"He believed in *pifao*—it nearly cost him his life! Let's see—it must have been in ninety-eight, or ninety-nine—a long while ago. Selby was still young in those days: a fine, handsome chap who carried himself well, the kind women like. I never liked him myself; too handsome altogether, with his dark eyes and little waxed mustache. Curious thing, when you meet an Englishman with a gift for languages, be on your guard! Selby was that kind. He'd knocked about the islands for years, doing a little trading, buying a few pearls, leading a half-shady kind of life. He was a man of education, mind you, and a gentleman born, but there was a rotten spot somewhere.

"Once I took him on as supercargo; he was with us a year before we caught him at his little game. Yes—the old story: booking his copra at top prices and pocketing the difference between that and what he'd really paid. I let the matter drop, though we sacked him, of course. He ought to have been grateful, but the fellow didn't lack effrontery—came into my office demanding an apology! The chief of Matahiva happened to have run across in his cutter; he was sitting here yarning with me

when Selby came blustering in. 'You know this man?' I asked the old chap in his own language. Selby was listening—there wasn't a white man in the group who spoke the native as he did. 'I know him well,' said the chief. 'He bought my copra last month.' That was my chance—a native doesn't forget prices. Old Tuatau mentioned the figure, and Selby wilted when I opened the book he had turned in a few days before.

"Selby was no worse than a dozen others, but somehow his crookedness didn't fit his voice, his manner or the cut of his clothes—incongruous, that was it. Don't think he wasn't an attractive beggar; men liked him until they found him out, and women— It's an odd thing, when you stop to think of it, what women will put up with from a fellow of Selby's kind; another man would have found himself in no end of a mess twenty times over, but he was always protected by the very women he'd made trouble for. I doubt if his philanderings led him into a single scrape till he met Nina Landon at the consulate.

"YOU'VE heard of Landon, the novelist? He's dead now; twenty years ago he was consul here. A big, stooping, dreamy man, who lived aloof from the world, and looked like a professor of Greek. Landon had wandered all his life, from one post to another—Brazil, West Africa, Java, Ceylon. Picked up his material that way, I suppose. He had a kind of unofficial clerk, who typed manuscripts and looked after the not very trying duties of unimportant consulates, a silent little man who had his meals alone, somewhere in the rear of the house.

"Old Landon was a widower; his daughter Nina kept house for him—the finest woman I've seen in this sinful place. She couldn't have been more than twenty in those days—a tall, blonde girl, with dark-blue eyes and magnificent hair. Tahia, who's still caretaker at the consulate, fell in love with Miss Landon the first day. We've no other words to express the odd, passionate, half-maternal emotion the girl inspired in the Marquesan woman; you've seen it among the natives—a racial peculiarity. Landon used to ask me to dinner now and then; I remember how Tahia hovered in the background during those meals, giving orders to the Chinaman in a low voice, and keeping an eye on every morsel of food her Nina ate. If the girl sent back a dish untasted, everyone in the room was conscious of Tahia's fidgets. Did Nina like crayfish, or some special kind of crab from a distant part of the island? The moment Tahia learned of it, one of her numerous relatives was sent for them, and next day the delicacy would appear on Landon's table. I used to wish she would conceive a passion for me!

"Miss Landon, as I told you, had magnificent hair; and Tahia's greatest delight was to exercise her privilege of combing it, after the girl's swim in the lagoon. I've often seen the two under the trees by the consulate: a mat spread on the grass—Nina half-asleep with her head on the elder woman's knee—Tahia bending over to brush and comb with a kind of tireless joy, an expression of extraordinary tenderness on her aquiline face. She was handsome in those days—she is still, though she's a very old woman now.

"That was how Selby saw them, a few days after a schooner from the Cook Islands had landed him here. He'd just made some sort of a sharp deal in pearls; it was possible then; the simple Kanaka hadn't learned all of the white man's tricks. Selby was prosperous for the moment. He always did himself well when he had anything; he'd rented a house, I remember, and hired a cook and a house-boy.

"ONE look at Miss Landon was enough. Selby wasn't a man to waste time. I was sitting on the veranda of the club when he came in, but he knew I wouldn't help him. He gave me a nod, and I saw him glance about till he spotted a group of tourists at a table near by. They'd know the new consul. He took a seat close to the strangers, called for the boy, and looked up as though he'd just perceived that their glasses were empty. 'Wont you join me?' he asked, with an air of casual hospitality. Next moment he was at their table, shaking hands as they introduced themselves.

"'You've a new consul since I was here last,' I heard him say a little later on. 'Yes, Roger Landon, the novelist,' replied a stout old gentleman beside Selby. 'We're going around to meet him this afternoon. He's made a pot of money out of his books!' Selby turned in his chair, suddenly attentive. The old chap mopped his forehead with a yellow silk handkerchief. His pongee suit was damp with perspiration, and his close-clipped gray hair stood up like the bristles of a shoe-brush. 'This is my first chance to meet Landon,' he went on. 'I'm a great admirer of his work!' Selby was clever enough to change the subject, and

presently I heard the sound of chairs being pushed back. 'Yes, come around to my place for lunch,' he was saying. 'I've some curios I just brought over from the Cook Group—stuff that might interest you.'

"Selby was one of the party when the tourists went to call on their consul that afternoon. He chatted with the novelist while the pretty Miss Nina poured the tea. I can imagine old Tahia, glowering and helpless in the pantry, behind a pair of flimsy curtains; she knew all about Selby and didn't want him in the house. Landon was impressed. Don't forget that Selby possessed an agreeable manner, a cultivated voice, and a very handsome person. He knew a lot about the islands, and could talk very entertainingly—old heathen customs, ghosts, devils, witchcraft, and all the rest. No doubt Landon thought to himself: 'Jove, I mustn't let this fellow escape!' It was the beginning of the courtship.

"It's curious how men behave at such a time; not one of us raised a hand to prevent the match. In the long run it doesn't pay to meddle with other people's lives, but it was a sin not to warn Landon; a decent Kanaka wouldn't have accepted Selby as a son-in-law. The man was clever—he played his cards without a single mistake. In the beginning he didn't accept all the consul's invitations, and he was careful to give the impression that he was more interested in the father than in the girl. He was polite to her, of course, and very friendly in a casual way. It wasn't long before he and the novelist were spending all their evenings together. Landon was a bit of a mystic, and Selby had been long enough in Polynesia to acquire the native point-of-view. He claimed to have witnessed one of their famous blood-spattering affairs, and he had a yarn about a night he'd spent on a *marae*—an old temple-platform in the bush—that wasn't bad. Nonsense, no doubt; but the man believed his own story—anyone could see that. Landon had come to the islands in search of that sort of thing. They used to sit on the veranda at the consulate long after everyone else was in bed, a lamp on the table between them, and Landon's notebook on his knee. He was fussy about detail—there must have been times when Selby longed to escape!

"A COUPLE of months passed in this way before Selby began to be seen with the girl. In spite of the wandering life she'd led, Nina didn't know much about men. This man must have been a figure of romance in her eyes; she was young, and lonely, and she had no other friends. Selby was like a native, in the water. They used to go swimming together in the lagoon, and sometimes he paddled to the consulate in an outrigger canoe and took her out to watch while he went down in ten fathoms to pick up shells from the bottom. After all, the island doesn't offer many diversions to a woman of Miss Landon's kind.

"Old Tahia was growing more jealous, more alarmed, with each day that passed. Like all Marquesans, she was a savage at heart; if she'd dared, I haven't a doubt she'd have knocked Selby on the head. She knew that sooner or later every woman took a man, but this man wouldn't do at all! She knew too much about him—what his life had been. Very little escapes the natives. If I were an artist and wanted to get the spirit of this island on canvas, I'd paint a green wall of jungle set with rows of staring eyes! That's how I see it. I fancy even Selby would have been astonished if Tahia had chosen to tell all she knew of him.

"What could the old woman do? No native in her place would have thought for a moment of speaking to the father; very few of them would have found courage to do what Tahia did. She spoke to the girl, one afternoon when she was combing her hair.

"Nina lay nearly asleep on the mat, her head on the old woman's knee. There was a long silence, while Tahia made two or three fruitless efforts to begin. At last she spoke, in her broken English. *Sepi* was as close as she could come to Selby's name. 'Sepi,' she asked abruptly, 'you like him?' Miss Landon opened her eyes and nodded sleepily. 'Nina,' the Marquesan woman went on severely, 'you listen Tahia—she talk true! Sepi no good! Dam' bad man—Tahia know! Too much woman—too much wife! Every island got baby—no give money—no give dress!'

"Nina sat up suddenly, her eyes very bright. Tahia's comb fell on the mat as the girl tossed her heavy hair back over her shoulders. 'You didn't know that I was going to marry Mr. Selby,' she said quietly. 'You mustn't say such things, Tahia!' She pointed to the house. 'Now go and see if Ah Kong has started dinner.'

"Tahia obeyed with a sense of despair, not knowing how deeply she had wounded the girl. Miss Landon was beginning



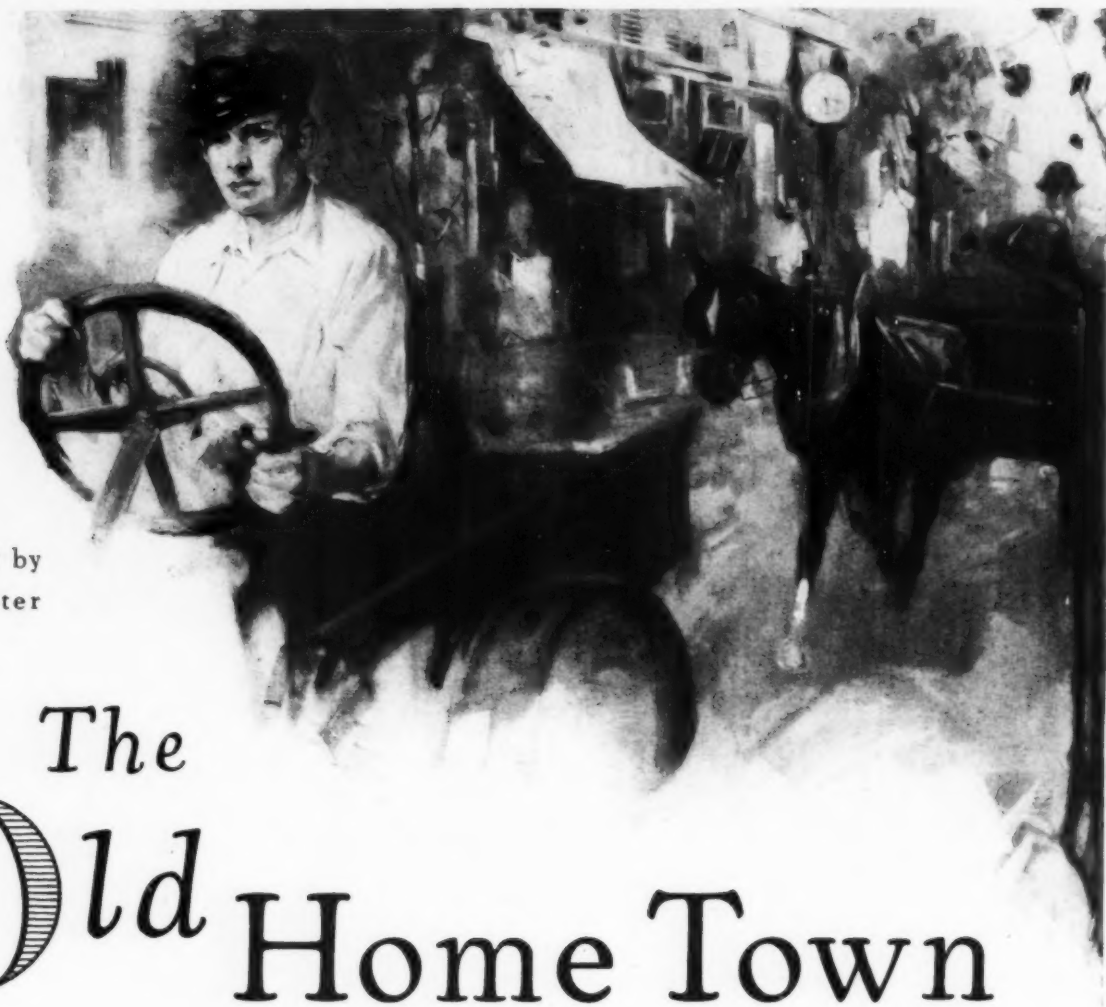
"There was a ferocity in Tahia's voice that shocked Nina, though she could not understand the invocation."

to have her doubts; she didn't know much about men, but a man of Selby's kind is bound to give himself away in the long run. She must have noticed little things as they grew more intimate—chance words let slip in the course of their talks, revealing glimpses of a callous egoism. But Nina had promised to marry him, though they hadn't asked Landon's permission as yet. And she was a woman who respected her word.

"Her doubts were dissipated a fortnight later, when Selby fell ill. He had dined at the consulate the night before, and in the morning, when he woke up very sick and with a splitting head, he thought of the red coral-fish he'd eaten at dinner. Indigestible—but he'd never had an attack of indigestion like this. There

was a new house-boy; the old one had been gone a week. Selby sent the lad to tell Miss Landon that he was ill and couldn't go swimming that day. She knocked at his door half an hour later—all anxiety and tenderness.

"Selby grew worse. He developed a fever, and by night his pains were so severe that Nina refused to go home. They had the doctor in twice before morning; he admitted that he was puzzled. Mr. Landon spent most of the night at his friend's bedside, but at dawn he went home worn out, leaving Nina dozing in a hammock on the veranda. She had left the door open, telling Selby to call her if the pain returned. It came in paroxysms, broken by periods of tor- (Continued on page 147)



Illustrated by
Will Foster

The Old Home Town

THE letters that this magazine is receiving in which the present story by Mr. Hughes is "praised to the skies" would seem to indicate that all the lesser towns in these United States are Carthages, and that all the dwellers in them are just the sort of people about whom Mr. Hughes is writing. Almost without exception the many letter-writers identify the characters, if not in the person, at least in the spirit, as conspicuous among their own neighbors.

By Rupert Hughes

The Story So Far:

CARTHAGE was a peaceful upper Mississippi River town, usually. So the murder of the Martling family by a mysterious ax-wielder had for many weeks furnished ample theme for conversation. So too the trial of Jere Haden, a small politician accused of that murder, was an event of first importance. And thus it happened that Loren Brown, editor of the local newspaper, found himself for once with all too much news to "cover" when he learned that on the day the Haden trial opened, the wedding of Eliza Lail was to occur at the house of her aunt Mrs. Budlong, the self-elected social arbiter of Carthage.

Brown made the mistake of deciding that the wedding was more important than the preliminaries of the trial. He had just drunk a toast to the bride when he was called to the telephone and informed that partisans of Jere Haden had staged a small riot in the courtroom, and that some one had shot and mortally wounded Nelson Webb, the substitute prosecuting attorney. Ignorant or forgetful that Mrs. Webb and her children were among the guests, Brown made his excuses to Mrs. Budlong and announced the tragedy. Mrs. Webb hurried home with her brood to bid farewell to her dying husband—and a little later certain of the townsfolk saved further legal expense by lynching Haden.

The widowed Mrs. Webb got along somehow, and in a few years the oldest boy Ben was able to help with his earnings as a mechanic. All through these years Ben from afar worshiped Odalea Lail, who had been a flower-girl at the wedding the day his father was shot. And when one fall her cousin and traditional beau "Ulie" Budlong went back to college while Odalea stayed home, opportunity came to Ben Webb—strangely.

For Ben was summoned to mend the run-down Lail furnace, and while seeking to make life more comfortable for his adored Odalea, he hit upon a device for automatic water-heating that seemed likely to win him fortune. Odalea rewarded his successful experiment in her own house by going buggy-riding with him in the accepted form which the automobile was just beginning to displace. Over the bridge and along the river they drove; and



She saw Ben Webb drive by. She liked him the better for cutting her.

Ben's mastery of the frantic horses when collision threatened in a narrow place was to Odalea thrilling indeed. And when after a picnic supper at sunset, Ben took her in his arms and kissed her, she did not protest too much.

Yet on the homeward drive they each began to realize the obstacles: Odalea the horror of her family at a match with the lowly plumber; Ben the duty he owed to his widowed mother and to the younger children—how could he support two households? And when they reached home, each encountered lively demonstrations of the situation—Odalea a mother and father and the dominant aunt Mrs. Budlong sitting up wrathfully to greet her.

For two great pieces of news had come to Carthage that day: the railroad was to build its shop there and send in many workmen, along with an office force of socially attractive young Easterners; and the dam across the river, which with its power-plant had for years been the hope of the town (and especially of Odalea's father, who had plunged in real estate), was again promising an early realization. (*The story continues in detail.*)

WHEN Odalea left Ben at the curb and went across the lawn to meet her mother and father and her aunt, Mrs. Budlong, she marched with the brave resignation of a French beauty going to the Tribunal of Death.

The porch was dark, and Odalea's three judges sat in their chairs a little darker than the dark, a little grimmer than the Fates. It was not pleasant for the girl to move from the moonlight of romance and youth linked with youth, to the cave of old cynicism.

Her mother was the first to whine:

"Where on earth you been, staying out so late?"

"It isn't so late, Mamma."

Her father played second fiddle: "It's mighty late for nice girls to be out. When your mother was your age, she never—"

"I'd rather hear her mother's story about that."

To crush the mutiny, Mrs. Budlong intervened, using her deepest, most society register:

"It's not the hour that matters, my dear. It's the company you have kept."

"Oh, good evening, Auntie! And what are you doing up so late?"

Mrs. Budlong rode calmly over her.

"The thing that matters, my dear, is that one of our family should so far forget—"

"But everybody else in town has so far forgotten my existence—in this town that God forgot—that if I didn't go out with Ben, I shouldn't go out with anybody."

"Then you shouldn't go out with anybody."

Odalea sat on the porch-rail and cast an arm about a pillar, looking like impatience on a monument as she protested:

"That's easy enough for you to say! And when I'm your age, I'll probably be saying the same to my daughter—if I should have one. Which looks unlikely in this old maid's town."

It was not kind to speak of age to the aged, but when age pretends to wisdom, youth must strike back somehow.

Odalea had unwittingly left the opening that Mrs. Budlong wanted. Mrs. Budlong was rarely rude enough to attack anybody frankly. She used the far more offensive weapon of sweetness. Like a warrior in a candy-shop, she would knock you down with a club of peppermint or envelop you in a bucket of molasses. She loved especially to take your words and twist them back on you, wrap you up in them as with ropes of taffy.

Mrs. Budlong had already learned what Ben Webb was not to find out till the morrow. She had once entertained a girl from New York who had visited a school-chum in Carthage; and this New York girl, Ione Bleeker, remembering her visit, had sent her brother Evert with a letter of introduction to Mrs. Budlong. And that brother was the first of the Easterners to arrive. He was the scout in advance of the advance party.

Mrs. Budlong began her smothering attack on Odalea by wasting on a mere niece several of her most precious "my dear's." But then, she already saw Odalea as the wife of this Mr. Bleeker, and imagined herself visiting them in their New York home on Fifth Avenue, where she would wave from her window to Mrs. Astor and ask Mrs. Vanderbilt if she wouldn't come in.

So she turned on Odalea all her saccharinity:

"But my dear! That's just the point. This is not going to be an old maid's town any longer. Carthage is coming into her own. While you were gadding about the wilderness with your plumber, a very handsome, very refined young gentleman from New York was calling on me. His name is Evert Bleeker. His father is the fourth vice-president of the N. Y. & S. F. Railway Company, and his family is old enough to have one of the prettiest streets in New York named after it.

"If you had stayed at home just one more evening, I could have brought him over to call on you. He tells me—Mr. Bleeker tells me—that twenty or thirty young men from the East are to be sent here at once. The Chicago and Pacific is to open large offices here, and big shops, and many of the Eastern magnates are sending their sons here to learn the railroad business from the bottom. They all expect to be railroad presidents some day, as dear Mr. Bleeker says. He is very witty—quite humorous, really! And very handsome! Dresses like a gentleman! A college man, too! He would have graduated from Yale, he told me, if—if something or other hadn't happened—I forget just what. He was too devoted to athletics, I think he said.

"So his father took him out of college and advised him to come out here. He is having his car shipped out. It's a racing-car. And he plans to buy a gasoline launch. He likes our river."

"The Mississippi will be pleased!" murmured Odalea.

Mrs. Budlong, being a wholesale dealer in sugar, hated vinegar, but she ignored Odalea's sarcasm, and rolled on:

"Mr. Bleeker and all these young gentlemen will want to know the nice girls in town. In fact, he said as much. He would be an ideal—er—friend for you."

Odalea was cold:

"There are plenty of other girls for him to take out in his racing-car and his putt-putt boat."

HER scorn of Mr. Bleeker was a loyalty she felt she owed to Ben Webb, whom she saw now in her mind's eye as she had seen him on the cliff-road lashing the horses up over the broken rim, and managing them with fierce vigor as they flaunted their windy manes in the moonlight. She had clung to that arm of his and felt its power. Her ribs were still aching from the clench of his sinews. Her lips were still tingling from the blows of love Ben's lips had dealt them.

But when she learned that dozens of young city men were descending on Carthage to change its torpor to vivacity, she was a little afraid of herself under the new temptation.

As if this were not news enough for one Carthage evening, her mother piped in with still greater wonders:

"And what do you suppose? The dam is going to be built! A man called on your father late this afternoon and made him an offer for one of the lots. He took an option on it till Monday. If he buys it, you can have some new clo'es. Heaven knows you need 'em!"

The visit of this stranger had stirred the house as much as if he had set it on fire. It had been almost unendurable to have Odalea absent at such a time. But the hours had passed, and the excitement had grown so stale, that when the message was finally delivered, it was given with a sense of resentment.

Odalea could still laugh, but with a faltering bravado:

"Well, Carthage certainly is coming along in the world. The Lails will sell a lot and be rich! So up go our noses. The town boys are no longer good enough for us. Nothing less than future railroad presidents will be invited to Mrs. Budlong's."

She wondered if she could keep her nose down. It had been easy when her head was bowed. But here was a chance to be the belle of Carthage with the great Mrs. Budlong as her sponsor.

If Ben Webb had asked her to marry him, she would have accepted him and would never have dreamed of breaking her promise. She would have shared his humility and sustained herself by poetic thoughts of the dignity of toil, the grand virtues of the sturdy middle-class, the contemptibleness of caste distinctions in this republic.

But Ben had not asked her. . . . Still, he might ask her. He would probably call on her tomorrow evening and make good what he had implied in his onset of love.

WHILE she was turning this over and over in the back of her mind, her aunt had been talking on and on. Odalea emerged from her reverie in time to hear:

"I invited Mr. Bleeker to come to dinner tomorrow. And I want you should be there."

"At noon?" said Odalea with a start. Mrs. Budlong snapped:

"Of course not! At seven P. M.! From now on, we're going to have dinner instead of supper in the evening, every day. And you'd better practice calling noon dinner 'luncheon.' It's the way they do in the East."

Odalea laughed:

"What will poor Uncle do? He's so in the habit of walking home at noon for his fodder. And he's hungry again at half-past five. And ready for bed at nine. He's in for it."

"Don't worry about him. I'll manage him, if you don't mind. You'll come, of course, and you'd better see if you can't fix up your blue dress. They're wearing them very plain and—"

"I have an engagement tomorrow evening," said Odalea.

"Who with? That plumber?"

"I didn't say so."

"You must break it, whoever it's with."

"I can't."

"You will! If I were your father, I'd forbid the wretch to come to the house."

"Papa would have to pay his bill first."

This was inexcusable. Youth can be more cruel to age and failure than they can ever be to youth, since youth has only a little past and a future whose inevitable humiliations are not yet made manifest.

Old Mr. Lail was "touchy" about his poverty and his ill-repute as a bill-payer. Old Mrs. Lail felt that while it was an affliction to have bills, it was an outrage to demand their payment. Mrs. Budlong had more money than they, but not half enough for her ambitions; and she was always at war with her husband over her expenditures for salted almonds, guest-cards, "boughten" flowers and other nonsense.

So Odalea's insolence brought all three of them about her head with such virulence that they put her to flight.

"I've got a headache, please." She yawned and went in, letting the screen-door slam.

"What's to be done with such an ungrateful child?" moaned her mother.

The others had no answer for the riddle, and sat in miserable silence save for the creak of the old furniture as they rocked.

Finally Mrs. Budlong pronounced: "Just wait till she meets Mr. Bleeker—and gets some new gowns!"

Upstairs, none too happy herself, Odalea undressed in the dark for fear of the night-swarms that her lamp would draw in through the shredded old screens.

At last she heard her father yawn as a signal that it was time for Mrs. Budlong to be on her way. Mrs. Budlong went, dragging



poor old Lail along as escort, not because she felt unsafe but because ladies did not venture into the dark unattended.

This seemed to be the general opinion, for they could hardly make their way along the sidewalk for the slow-moving traffic of the couples dawdling in the shadows and whispering mysterious things.

Mrs. Budlong also whispered. Mr. Lail was so thick of hearing that she might as well have been in soliloquy, for all he heard. And Mrs. Budlong really wanted him to hear that she was going to make Odalea meet the young Easterners, and was going to marry her off to one of them in spite of herself.

To be able to toss into her conversation a casual reference to "my nephew-in-law in New York, you know"—that would be very pleasant! Mrs. Budlong was so advanced that she pronounced the word "nephew" as they did in the East. She abhorred the cheap Carthage way of saying "neff-phew!"

Chapter Nineteen

THAT was as sleepless a night for Odalea as it was for Ben Webb.

If she could have known that he had given her up as a prize too expensive for his poor lot, she might have been happier. She would have loved him more deeply, but she would have been relieved of the gadflies of suspense. She wanted to do the right thing, the ideally idyllic thing. But she could not afford to give up marriage. It was her only career. After all, Ben had his work, his talents, his inventions.

Odalea had no talents, no invention, no work except household drudgeries, as regular, and as hopelessly recurrent, as the days of the week. She had been trained to be a wife for somebody. She would be a good wife, a darling, a pride about the house; but she would never be one of your newfangled women who can go out in the world and best the men at their own jobs.

Still, it was of her nature to be as honest as she could. She

She cried: "Look—look!" "I am looking," he answered, staring at her the harder.

had defied ridicule and family hostility, and given Ben a chance to tilt at her heart. She had intrusted herself to his chivalry and had even risked her life to give him his way.

She had given Fate its perfect opportunity, had sat demure through the twilight, and when Ben had poured out his love and taken her in his arms with ferocity, she had neither coquetted nor pretended niceness nor rebuked him. She had accepted even his kisses. She was not quite sure that she had not returned them. In that hurlyburly of passions everything was so confused that she could not remember not embracing him, and she would not have sworn that her lips were altogether idle while his were so urgent.

Yet he had not quite said: "Will you marry me?" He had certainly not said: "When?" He had made no mention of an engagement, or a ring. His failure to make a direct proposal must then have been a mere oversight in the rush of ecstasy—or a sudden fear to ask too much at once. It would be only fair to him and to her own good name in her own heart, to assume that he had taken an option on it—as the man had taken an option on one of the old Lail lots.

Ben was probably counting on seeing her the next evening. He would drift by afoot or a buggy, and shyly propose another excursion into the moon-world; and then she would learn his actual thought of her. So she would not be persuaded all the next day

They would not let him in where his sister Petunia was standing half-clad while a sewing-woman agonized about her.

to reconsider her refusal to go to Mrs. Budlong's dinner. When her mother made herself unbearable, Odalea went across the street and visited Beulah Cinnamon. But Beulah was invited to the dinner and would talk of nothing but the invasion of smart young men. So Odalea went to another friend and encountered more porch-talk of the new Carthage.

She walked down to Main Street and studied the windows of the women's shops. Far as their displays were from Paris, they were leagues nearer than her own best, and it made her heart ache to imagine her body in some of them.

She saw Ben Webb drive by. He was in his truck on some emergency call, and he was a little more greasy and unkempt than usual. She was sure that he saw her; yet he was looking the other way when he passed. She knew him too well to think that he meant to slight her. She fancied that he wanted to save her from the necessity of speaking to such a figure as he made. She liked him the better for cutting her. But she did not know that he was cutting her out of his heart with a dull knife, for the sake of his nearer, perhaps his dearer, kin.

That night she dined with her querulous father and her peevish mother on their usual dreary diet. She had dressed in her best for Ben, and she sat on the porch and watched the street through the long twilight with its cool breeze going up and down the dusk, a roving Samaritan pouring balm on those whom the heat of the afternoon and its disappointments had wounded and wearied.

It was the 'tween-lights hour when lovers wake and walk in a Paradise rising mysteriously from the grave, the ghost of the old Eden returned, wherein all lovers are once more the first Adam and the first Eve that ever marveled at one another and invented the new, new miracle called love.

At every quick footfall on the pavement, Odalea's heart leaped to the same rhythm. Her eyes picked out the shadow and accompanied it to her gate, but forsook it when it passed. She paid no heed to the slow four-footed treads, since she knew that those belonged to couples that were complete.

When from the roadway came the rapid beat of hoofs with horseshoes ringing or sparkling on the sharp rock, she said to herself: "This may be his team." But all the horses went by, and all the automobiles, some of them slowly enough, with romance



busy under the hoods of the buggies, or in the gloom behind the motor-headlights. But none of them stopped at her curb. The eternal iron ducky boy held out the ring in his fist in vain.

The only life on the Lail front porch was the *clump-clump* of her mother's feet, the squeak of the rockers, the shifting shadows of her father's old shoes as he crossed and recrossed them on the rail, and now and then a sigh of defeated petulance from one or both of them.

But she knew what they were thinking of her. She could hear their brains ticking with the scolding of an old kitchen-clock. Her own brain was a watch whose mainspring is caught a loop too high and races feverishly.



At last she flung herself from her chair, kissed the doleful parental cheeks, tossed back a wretched "Good night!" and went to her room, tore off her clothes and made herself ready for her hateful bed.

The twilight breeze passed on. The still, hot night closed down and made the world an oven. Even when she pushed her bed to the window, she seemed to breathe a furnace blast. Yet the moon was cool, as cool and precious and far away as the wetted fingertip that Dives in hell begged Lazarus in heaven to bend down and lay on his forehead. The moon taunted the spinster Odalea and with the same rays blessed the lovers who were together.

Wondering why Ben had subjected her to the taunts of her

parents for going with him, and their more acid taunts for not going with him, she came almost to hate him for the treachery implied in his failure to complete the devotion he had implied. . . .

She must have slept at last, because she was surprised to find it forenoon. The hot night had given way to a cool morning, with a promise of rain before evening.

Somehow the sultriness in Odalea's heart was gone. She felt absolved of something, and was surprised after a long bewilderment to realize that her conscience had freed itself of its obligation to Ben Webb. She had given him his chance. He had challenged her to a duel, and she had waited for. (Continued on page 140)

A Yacht Darling

By

Ida M. Evans

THE hot California sun made its way through the white window-shades. The hour was almost noon. The place was Hollywood.

Ava Leander stirred in disturbed slumber. Through a chink in a shade, undeterred by thin net curtain, one ray poked at a tightly closed brown eye.

It poked farther. In a hot white path it found: a black georgette "step-in" whose orchid shoulder-ribbons had caught on a chair-rung; a prostrate pair of silver dancing slippers; on the floor, apparently having been aimed at a corner of gray enameled chiffonier, a pair of onyx earrings. Ava was not of New England ancestry. A "cracker," one of her dearest friends had once dubbed her. But that was a slander: Ava was from Minnesota. But the dearest friend was not posted on locale. Still, it is to be feared that Ava's white stone front doorsill, if she had ever owned such a thing, would never have been scrubbed too clean.

Oh, well, there was some excuse for her flinging about of evening attire. The party had ended so very, very late. Indeed, a rising California sun had bleared a red eye over a pink horizon at homing revelers.

And Ava had been in a condition—well— Suffice it to say that in certain physical conditions one really does not feel up to putting cotton-wads even in one's last decent pair of party slippers. Nor to laying lingerie neatly over a chair-back. Nor to depositing jewelry on its tray. Indeed, those earrings were lucky to have been taken at all from Ava's disheveled, silky head. But she never could sleep comfortably with the long sharp things on. Once—when her "condition" had been more pronounced than usual—she had stirred sharply from a pre-dawn dream to dig a supposed rapier from her left cheek, and there had resulted a quarter-inch scar which had aroused inquisitive comment. Hollywood is so skeptical! It can hang a mighty murder to a pin-prick. And furthermore, Ava considered that she had been born unlucky. For when she found the proper person and told him it had occurred in a scene being taken in "The Lady of Sorrow" when as a rustic serving-maid she had been hit by a pine-cone in a Maine orchard (picture-making is such perilous work, all fans should believe), why, this person had said, being cold-brained: "Say, listen, you owe me twenty-five dollars for last month's write-ups. Anyway, you can't gyp me into using any yarn as punk as *that*. Poor imagination, my dear girl! You're poor!"

This morning her pettishly opened eyes rested first on the earrings on the floor. They were a needed link to connect memory with last night. "Lordy, my throat's dry."

She made a movement toward arising—didn't arise. Was there anything, other than an arid palate, that called for immediate upspringing from pillow? It seemed to her there was— She puckered a forehead fretfully. What—oh, good gracious, what?

She blinked at the georgette step-in. It showed wear. She needed new lingerie. She blinked again at the earrings. Came a gloomy curl to a yawn-parted mouth. Onyx! That truck! One pretended, of course, that odd-stoned jewelry was more artistic than precious gems. But, mused Ava now, is there any-

MISS Evans recently returned to her Michigan farm after a year in Hollywood, whither she had gone to aid in the filming of some of her own stories. It is not to be wondered that, remote from the capital of Celluloidia, she should see the life of the studios in relation to life as a whole. The present story depicts something of that relation, with satire, and yet with perfect appreciation and sympathy.

Illustrated by
Everett Shinn

thing on earth more purely and perfectly artistic than blue-white, polycarat diamonds that can both glitter in a pink, perfumed lobe and sparkle also in a steel safe-deposit box against a rocky future?

In her torpor, still not wide awake, she sat up lazily, groped for her slippers, then slumped down again on the foot of the bed while she put the question pettishly to herself, and glanced around her room.

She didn't much like her room at the Geranium Arms. It was elaborately furnished in plenty of pale gray wood and beveled mirrors. But one could rent a thousand rooms like it in other Arms in Hollywood, for thirty-odd dollars weekly. What is common is not charming. Oh, never. Not in Minnesota nor in Hollywood. Perhaps not in Paradise!

But that onyx bangle, what did it remind— She was up in a flash, standing on quivering feet, one of which began to beat a panicky tattoo on the gray worsted rug. Onyx—that was the kind of vase Milly Vell smashed in the honeymoon scene of "Brittle Romances," and this morning they were to retake the ballroom scene. She had again overslept! This was perilous.

She snatched her tiny watch from under the pillow. Eleven-twelve. She had asked that hazel-haired brat at the desk to call her at seven. Some fine day she'd repay that young woman.

She took a taxi to the studio, ten blocks west, and muttered at the expense. Always something! In the taxi she put on make-up, with swift, skillful, if sulky fingers. Arrived at the Septimus lot, she was into dressing-room, into costume, and then out among cameras and a crowd of actors and other people in an incredibly short space of time.

Even so, she got due attention. A man in his shirt-sleeves took a cigar out of his mouth to stare icily at her. A man in a Tuxedo took himself out of a lounging attitude to stare furiously at her. A man in tweed suit whirled upon her.

Everybody waited. The third man began to smile faintly, as if delicately and sarcastically and unbelievably amused. He was not amused, however. His intonation was as laughless as the jab of a poniard. He said, with a wave of his arm:

"Ah, she thinks she is Pola. Dear Miss Leander, allow me to correct your very large and unnatural mistake. You are not the



One could rent a thousand rooms like it. What is common is not charming. Not in Minnesota nor in Hollywood.

great one. She is not even working in this studio. You are a society extra on the Septimus pay-roll—and liable to be lopped from where you were sitting so pretty. Wont you, oh, wont you, dear Miss Ava Leander,"—he dropped his voice to an indescribably low and bitter note,—“please, please jot down that little fact in your German-silver-monogrammed engagement-book?”

She took the verbal lashing—for such it was—with an imperceptible shrug of her pretty, bare white shoulders, and adjusted a jeweled (glass) shoulder-band of the evening gown of *Miss Daisy Hope*, ballroom guest of a pork-baron's daughter, who was rocking her matrimonial boat in luxurious waters for several reels.

And a great deal might have been read into that small, angry but half-insolent acceptance of a humiliating incident.

Oh, Ava Leander knew her place! Neither over- nor under-valuation, professionally, did she give herself.

She was not a star, nor a leading lady. Only occasionally did she get a part in support of a leading woman. But she had

her screen place. She had what is known, and much respected, as good stage-presence. She chanced to possess one of those graceful long-limbed bodies that fans accept as aristocratic. She had the knack of wearing satins and pearls as if behind her lay three generations of nobility. The type is rarer, it happens, than ingénue, curlilocks or “boyish shape.”

She could be replaced, of course; who can not—king or star or quarterback? But in Hollywood there were not a million like her. A casting director has his limitations, at least of time. She would be cast forth if this morning were repeated—say, this week. But she would take care not to repeat this for a long time. At the call of, “Camera!” she knew that she was forgotten temporarily, if not forgiven.

Across the ballroom setting she met the eyes of Joe Stuckow. He was the man in shirt-sleeves, second assisting director on this Septimus picture. She had known Joe a long time. In fact, several years back, both of them had taken the same month to

"Women like you are rats! Always nibbling at a man. Making trouble for him with his wife and children."

come to Hollywood. Joe was wild now. But then, Joe didn't matter—much. At least, he'd hardly say anything. Joe—she smiled to herself faintly—was that kind.

Perhaps premonition was at work. Who can say what little ticklings of soul do not forewarn of approach to a spiritual crossroad?

Ava had finished her day of work and was removing her make-up when for some reason memory of those several past years seemed to straggle through her reluctant mind, beginning with 1919, when her chief wish had been to wear Mary Pickford's shoes—those tiny shoes which, alackaday, have proved far too large for so many wearers!

Too large they proved for Ava. But in 1920 her chief wish had changed—to wear any star's shoes. And in 1921 she knew her chief wish to be for a mansion in Beverly Hills. In '22, for a few decent clothes (the wording is her own) to wear to the Coconut Grove. In '23—a marcel unyielding to the ocean air in which a yacht moves and has its being! In '24—an *unfailing* hundred per. Time is so educative. The small, wry smile over the tabulation still was tucked in a corner of Ava's carmined mouth an hour later in her room at the Geranium Arms when a boy brought to her a note.

And the note, too, helped her mood. Ongy Phelps had recalled an invitation for a dance on his yacht for the evening. Reason—yacht was out of working order. "Oh, damn," muttered Ava. "What'll I do tonight, then?" It was significant that Ongy didn't offer anything in place of the yacht.

At this point the hazel-eyed young woman who was day-clerk at the Arms drifted into the room. Dessy Bloomington had come to Hollywood to "write." The clerkship was a coal laid by ambition on the altar of preparation.

"Sleeping too hard to hear my call this morning?" said Dessy lightly.

Ava was not guileless. But she decided to give her the benefit of the doubt. Besides, in Hollywood one learns many things.

"I forgot till morning that we didn't start work till noon," she lied smoothly.

Dessy smiled. One learns to smile—where all lie unwisely and none too well. She didn't believe Ava, and she knew that Ava knew that she didn't believe her. "Wouldn't life be lovely," she murmured, "if we could all sleep till noon, work an hour or two, and dine and dance till time to sleep again?" The philosophic murmur was being much affected by Hollywood that season.

"Lovely." Ava knew just what Miss Bloomington—from Ohio—meant.

"By the way, I've got an idea for a film. Mind looking it over? Probably unsalable. I did it more for practice. But I'd love your opinion—and any corrections on atmosphere and such. You"—a gentle pause—"know more about some things here than I do."

Ava recalled that not long ago the girl had hinted for an inclusion in one of Ongy Phelps' yacht dances. Ava's ears had been cold.

It was true that scenarios, like geraniums, bloom freely in all Hollywood buildings as well as elsewhere. She shrugged acquiescence. One had to pretend to be polite—future morning arousings might depend upon it.

"Leave it. I'll look it over."

She did not really intend to read it. But having no particular place to go that evening, she had no impulse to fare forth. The day had left its unpleasant brand. Idly enough, she looked at that first uppermost page on her chiffonier where Dessy



had deposited her brain-child. The title arrested her attention.

Smoking many cigarettes, she read the thing through—twice, thrice. Meanwhile her eyes gathered that furious opalescent anger peculiar to felines that have been grossly insulted.

After the third reading, Ava smoked ruminatively two more cigarettes. Awhile she sat, not by her fire, for there are few fires in Hollywood, but by her movable gas-stove.

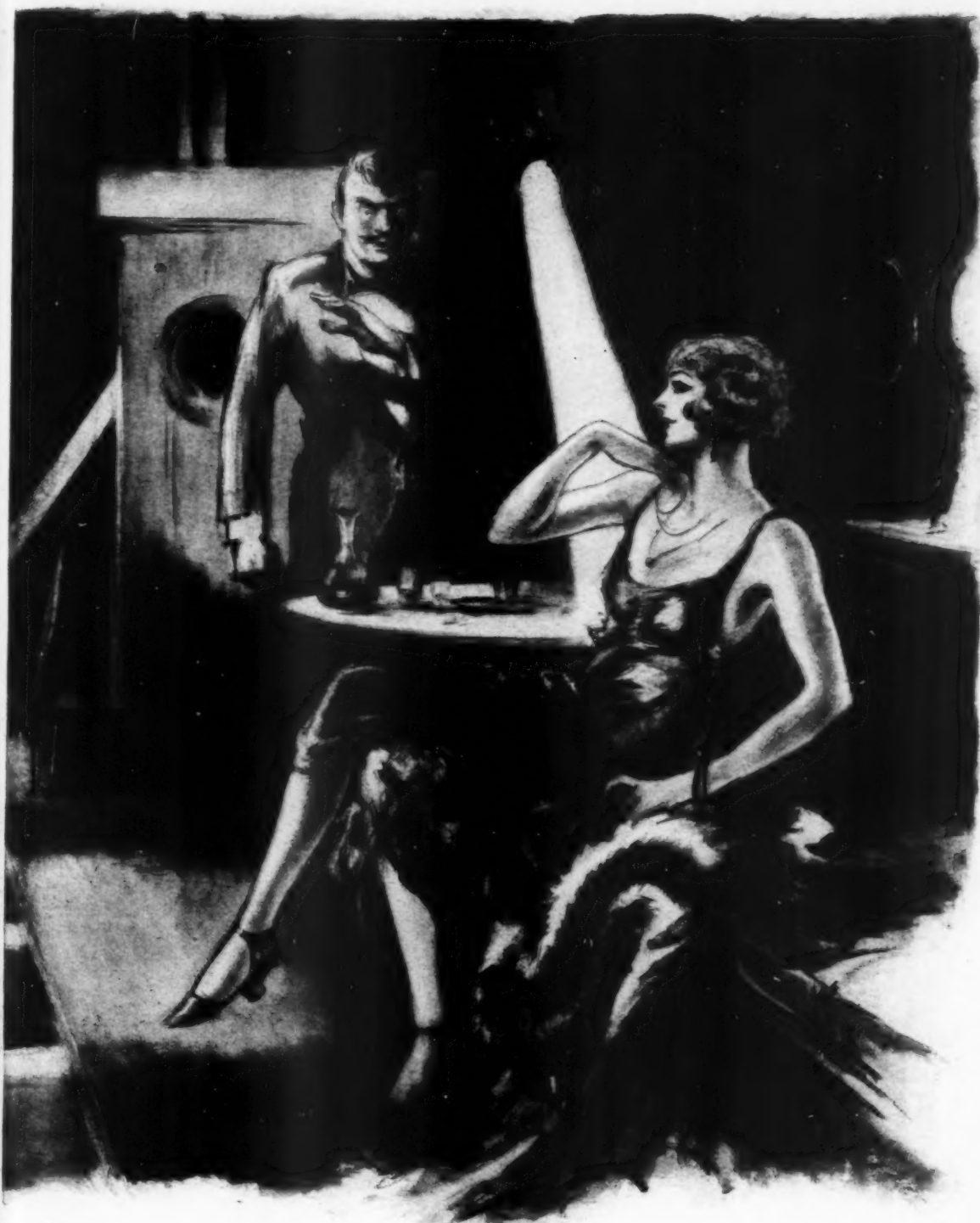
And then she rose and telephoned to Joe Stuckow.

"Busy tonight? Like to see you about something?"

"What for?" There was a hint of distaste in his voice.

Well, there had been a time when every afternoon he had said to her: "See you tonight? Sure?" Anxiously—just like that.

"I've got an idea for a good picture," she explained smoothly. "I'd like to outline it to you. Think we can both profit."



ALWAYS there lies the chance of another "Miracle Man" or "Humoresque."

Joe Stuckow listened at first in the wary attitude of all those persons who by chance or by merit have come to hold a judicial relation to any creative effort. Would he hear a mess of rot or another money-luring "Pollyanna?"

Still, he meditated, Ava was no greenhorn at the picture game. She'd know rot, too. He leaned back in his gray-enameled chair in more receptive posture.

While she began to read, Ava crushed a rose-geranium leaf in her fingers. Unthinkingly, perhaps—or purposely. At her elbow stood red geraniums in a bowl. A crushed green geranium leaf is pungent beyond most other perfumes. And Ava had been long enough identified with Hollywood to be imbued with a poseur's passion for the small but pungent bits of atmosphere.

She read, or said, like any writer seeming to add certain vital touches which haste had omitted in the penciled draft: "You see the girl—*Lily*—comes to Hollywood—"

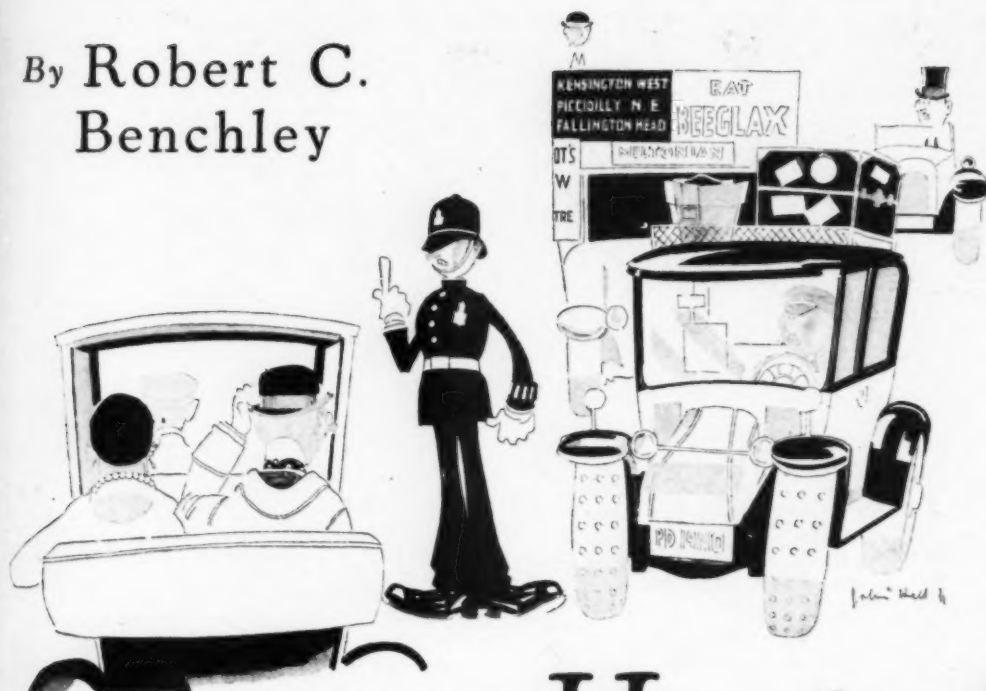
"Oh, Ava," he protested at the start. "Hollywood stories are pretty dead. Been worked to death."

"So," she returned smoothly, "have Western stories. Mother—sex—triangle—married life—great lovers. But none of 'em seem to stay dead. Keep still, Joe, and let me read."

He leaned back resignedly.

"*Lily* comes to Hollywood from—say, Kansas. "*Will* comes from—um—Missouri. They meet—oh, drug-store or some such place. Mutual attraction. Intensified by their similar situations. Both young, clever, caught by the lights of Hollywood. He thinks Griffith has pointed a path for him to follow. She thinks she has unsuspected depths in her soul. (Continued on page 112)

By Robert C.
Benchley



It was precisely as Mr. Benchley prophesied—that is, with the Peters' in London. He did all he could to dissuade them from visiting the city. But despite dissuasion, they would go. "And what could one do?" as Mr. Benchley so well says. In any event it is with an unusual depth of feeling that he chronicles here those Londonian adventures.

Hands Across

the Tea

Illustrated by
John Held, Jr.

TO the residents of London, England, who keep tabs on such things, there was nothing remarkable about the boat-train which pulled into Victoria Station from Dover late Tuesday afternoon, unless perhaps it was that the door-catch on one of its carriages was in perfect working order. This created no great stir, however, for as short a time before as October 1921, the door-catch on a railway carriage had been found in good condition, and that had rather taken the edge off the novelty of the thing.

Had Londoners but known, however, what this train really contained, they would have drawn a cordon of their splendid police around the station and searched each and every passenger as he went through the gate, for since the Boston boys boarded the tea-ships off Charlestown, there had been no more momentous or disastrous invasion of British territory.

The invasion was, it is true, not an impressive one. It consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Peters, of Dyke, Ohio, both rather seedy-looking from their recent experience with the English Channel. Mr. Peters wore a raincoat, never, even at its best, what you could call "smart," but which was now all wrinkled up the back from Mr. Peters' having sat crouched up in a corner of the packet-boat without once stirring, even to raise his head, from the time they were outside the Calais jetty until the highly advertised white cliffs of Dover were sighted. Mrs. Peters still had one of those wisps of hair straggling down over her forehead, the sure brand of a woman's shame at sea. There was nothing about the Peters', as an army of invasion, to frighten even a less sturdy race than the Britons.

"It will seem good," said Mr. Peters weakly, "to be in a country where they speak English."

As he spoke, he was approached by a porter who reached for the Peters' luggage, and made, at the same time, a strange sound something like the call of a whippoorwill.

"What did he say?" asked Mrs. Peters.

"He didn't say anything," replied Mr. Peters. "He wants to sing for us, I guess." And to the man he said: "No, nothing today." But the man was not to be put off. He repeated his snatch of song, this time sustaining it longer and throwing his voice to better advantage.

"He is talking to us, Walter," insisted Mrs. Peters. "Answer him."

"Answer him?" replied Mr. Peters angrily. "What shall I say? Why doesn't he speak English if he wants to be answered?"

But the porter was, by this time, equally disgusted with Mr. Peters, and snatching the bags, started off in the direction of the taxicabs.

"Perhaps we got off at the wrong stop," suggested Mr. Peters. "This may be Holland."

But as all the signs in the station seemed to be in English, they decided that maybe it was a foreign porter, there for the convenience of Europeans landing in England, and followed him with scant confidence to the cabs.

The cabman, however, was no more intelligible. He sang with a little less range perhaps, but by no stretch of the imagination could what he did be construed as speech. Singing waiters had been familiar to Mr. Peters in the old days, but singing porters and singing cabmen seemed to be carrying what must be a native lightness of heart a bit too far.





"Hotel Warburton," he said to the driver with a grim determination to end the thing right then and there, and oddly enough, the driver seemed to understand, for he started the engine and they were off.

"The damn' fool is driving on the wrong side of the street," exclaimed Mr. Peters nervously. His recent trouble in Paris with flying-taxicabs had rendered him jumpy. "He'll get arrested, and we'll all be thrown into the Tower of London."

But far from being arrested, the driver was actually encouraged in his left-handed madness by the policeman, who was supposed to be regulating the traffic. What was more, *everyone* seemed to be picking the left side. It was like a terrifying dream. Mr. Peters had driven a car for fifteen years in America, and in common with all hardened drivers whenever they ride with some one else at the wheel, was highly apprehensive and pushed constantly at imaginary brakes with his feet and groped with his hand for an imaginary gear-lever whenever he saw trouble ahead. And Mr. Peters saw nothing but trouble ahead on this ride. At each turn, with the driver deliberately approaching from the wrong angle, Mr. Peters covered his eyes. Machines seemed to be

coming head-on toward an inevitable smash; traffic jams impended with no hope of ever being untangled, and by the time they had gone five blocks, Mr. Peters was in a state of nervous collapse.

"I can't stand this," he said finally. "I'm going to get out and walk. I can make it better on foot. There's the hotel sign up ahead there."

But on foot it was even worse. Instinct, bred of a lifetime of crossing streets, made Mr. Peters look to the left on stepping off the curb, and as all traffic on that side was coming from his right, he was grazed and nicked and cursed at eleven times before he finally caught up with Mrs. Peters and their cab at the hotel entrance. His system, weakened by the battle with the Channel, was not up to the strain. Mr. Peters experienced the humiliation of having to be assisted to his room.

The theater seemed to be the logical relaxation for the evening. There was some talk of keeping Mr. Peters in bed until the next day, but he would hear none of it. They would uphold the highest traditions of traveling Americans and go to the theater. Furthermore, they would show that Americans knew what was what, and they would dress.

"I don't believe your dinner-coat looks very well, Walter," said Mrs. Peters. "It's been packed ever since we left New York."

"It will look all right for a town where they drive on the wrong side of the street," replied Mr. Peters, breaking a stud. And to tell the truth, it did look quite dressy enough when it was on and Mrs. Peters had tied the black tie in a neat bow and tucked the shirt in at the side where it bulged. A good, respectable American couple, out for an evening, is what they were, and what they looked like, and that ought to be good enough for anybody. It is true Mr. Peters had to wear his raincoat and a soft gray hat, for the slight drizzle, which had been falling in London since 1895, demanded some sort of practical protection, but the general effect was quite good enough.

That is, it was quite good enough until they reached the theater. Here it suffered a substantial setback. For the lobby was full of tall, handsome gentlemen in full-dress and silk hats. The Metropolitan Opera House in New York on a gala-night in mid-season never presented such an appearance of ritz as the foyer of this rather tiny theater in which a mediocre *revue* was to be enacted. Mr. Peters' raincoat suddenly became a brilliant yellow; his soft hat drooped in a crinkled mass around his ears; and his lowly dinner-coat, the patrician garb of Dyke, seemed to him, as he looked down at it, to be something that the man might come in to take out the ashes.

"We've got into the wrong theater," whispered Mrs. Peters. "This is the grand opera."

"It's the right theater, all right," said Mr. Peters, who had already looked to see, "but maybe the King is going to be here tonight. Or perhaps these are the actors. They talk like actors."

And the conversation which floated through the lobby was indeed that rich, highly bejeweled language which most Americans hear only from stage drawing-rooms peopled with visiting English actors. Even the door-men sounded like an Oxford graduate, and had just about as much use for Mr. Peters as an



Oxford graduate would have had. An initial bravado which Mr. Peters had whipped up with which to face the humiliation of the occasion failed him almost immediately under the scornful gaze of the other patrons of the theater and the employees. Everywhere he could detect a quick inventory of him and his effects as bourgeois American, and even, now and again, an occasional well-bred snigger. Even though he felt himself in the right, and knew in his heart that people do *not* wear full-dress to a mean little theater like this, if only for the reason that full-dress looks like hell on most men, he had not the strength to combat the combined *hauteur* of the gathering, and snatching off his raincoat and doubling it up under his arm, he dragged Mrs. Peters out into the street.

"We'll come back to this show tomorrow afternoon, when I can wear my sack suit," he said.

"Perhaps they wear their Tuxedos at *matinées*," suggested his wife.

"Well, anyway, I'll be stronger tomorrow," was all that he could think of as a further excuse. It was sufficient, however, for the party had lost its flavor, and Mrs. Peters was only too glad to slink back to the hotel. And even the elevator boy, probably the smallest elevator boy north of the Equator, seemed to be looking at Mr. Peters' Tuxedo and slouch hat, and at the raincoat under his arm, and whispering to a page boy who was even smaller: "Americans!"

At the *matinée* there were no dinner-coats. In fact, the Britons, who had presented such a terrifying appearance in evening regalia, seemed quite tacky in their day-clothes, and Mr. Peters' gray suit was more than sufficient. There was still, nevertheless, a tacit recognition on the part of the employees of the theater and the other members of the audience that here were a couple of representatives of the United States, independent through a bad bit of bungling on the part of George the Third, but still, under George the Fifth, something in the nature of rustic provincials bothering their wealthy relatives with a

fact, all over the house people were hailing ushers, who responded with complete outfits for whatever the ceremony was to be.

"They're having tea!" whispered Mrs. Peters.

Mr. Peters glanced about him apprehensively.

"Do they *live* here?" he asked.

"No, I don't believe so, Walter," replied his wife.

"I'll bet they do," he said, "and next you'll see them wheeling in beds for them to take their naps on. We're in a private hospital; that's where we are." And he looked around nervously for an exit.

But they were hemmed in. On all sides were tea-trays balanced skillfully on the knees of the inmates, completely blocking any egress. The tinkle of spoons against saucers, and the genteel sound of tea-service gave the place the air of a church supper. Mr. Peters sat down again, baffled.

"I guess they've called the show off," he said. "Why don't we order dinner sent up and spend the night?"

He joked, but Mrs. Peters saw that it was an ugly joke. She felt that, on top of having been made to feel *gauche* American for twenty-four hours, even this slight irritation was pressing on the nerve in the back of her husband's head. She felt, and she knew that he felt too, that in spite of their own scorn at the proceedings, they were being held in fine contempt by the Brit-
ishers for not joining in on the rite.

The lady at Mr. Peters' left having finished her meal and handed her tray to an usher, an opening was afforded through which the two Americans were quick to make their way. Slinking up the aisle under the superior gaze of what had once been a

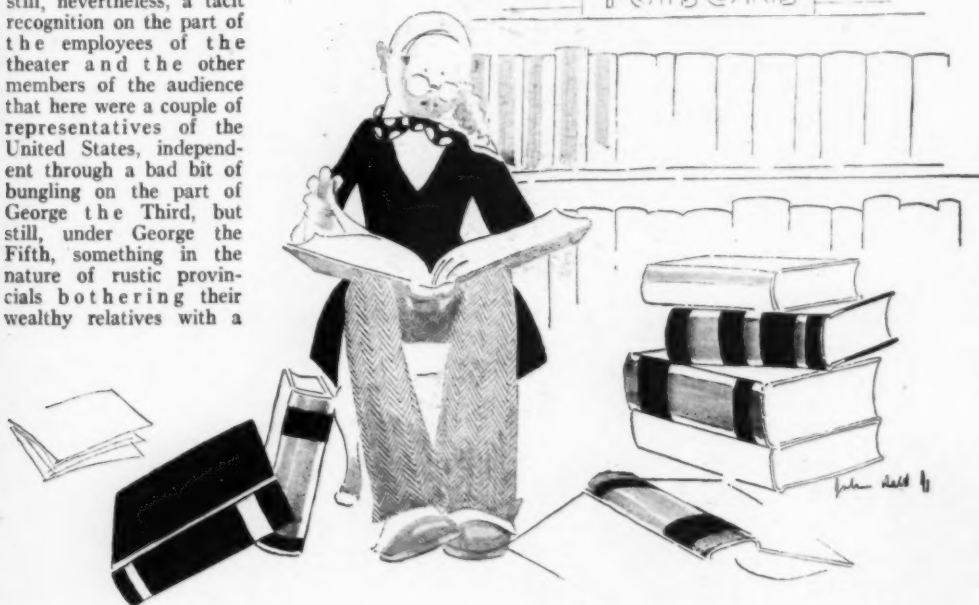
theater-audience, they reached the street blushing furiously. But in the street, what a sight confronted them!

The city's activities were at a standstill. Busses had stopped and were standing in their tracks while occupants and drivers were served with tea-trays; policemen sat down in little chairs provided for the purpose while underlings of the force supplied them with the invigorating national beverage; pedestrians lined up at tea-bars and stirred their cupfuls meditatively, while from office-buildings and banks and the thousand-and-one insurance offices which mark every other doorway in London, came the sound of crockery and tea in intimate combination. It was like one of those sentimental occasions when, by proclamation of the Government, all business

and traffic is suspended for three minutes out of respect to the nation's dead. And in the midst of it the Peters' were pariahs, outsiders, unwelcome, and unworthy of even the offer of a cup and saucer.

For once Mr. Peters was baffled. His machinery for homicide, so efficient in the destruction of individuals who had upset his nerves in the past, was inadequate in the face of such mass provocation; and never before had he needed it so much. He fished through his pockets, feeling in vain for some little bijou of death which might express in some slight measure his resentment, but found nothing except a small revolver, some poisoned needles, a vial of deadly gas and a stiletto. And before him lay a city of seven millions of people, all ripe for the slaughter. With a snort of baffled rage, Mr. Peters rushed back to his hotel.

IN all previous accounts of Mr. Peters' killings, we have been able to report on the actual casualties before this magazine went to press. Unfortunately for the completion of our records, we are unable to do more this time than to set down a few items of preliminary interest during the re- (Continued on page 157)



visit to the Big City. Mr. Peters' shoes were shined, and he had more poise than he had had the night before, but there was yet that feeling that he was somehow the butt. And to Mr. Peters, this feeling, as half the civilized world had by this time good reason to know, was something in the nature of that red thing they wave at a bull—red rag; that's the word.

During the intermission the Peters' decided that they would be less conspicuous if they stayed in their seats. In fact, most of the house seemed to be remaining seated as if in anticipation of some big announcement or event on the stage. Mr. Peters revived his favorite solution of every tense situation in British life and decided that the King must be coming. As he looked toward what might be the Royal Box at his right, his left arm was joggled, and he turned to see the lady next him struggling with a large tray which an usher had just passed to her. On the tray was a pot of some hot liquid, a cup and saucer, cream, and some biscuits. Mr. Peters looked away again, fearing that he would embarrass the lady, who was evidently an invalid.

As he turned, however, he saw Mrs. Peters being joggled on the other side as a tray was passed to a gentleman on her right. In

Springing high in the air, the blackcat ripped thick masses of down from the breast of the great horned owl.

Illustrated by
Charles Livingston
Bull

The Killer

By Samuel
Scoville, Jr.

SAMUEL SCOVILLE, Jr., as a lad in New England, found his greatest interest in studying the habitat and habits of the wild life. Later, in Yale, where he won fame as an athlete, he still found time to follow the trails of the animals. Now, a lawyer in Philadelphia, wild life provides him his deepest interest. Just at present he is in the far Northwest, paying a visit to the wood-bison there.

LIKE the inside of a seashell Seven Mountains showed all pearl and silver and opal after the first snowfall of the year. In the west the sun was setting in a drift of rose-red clouds which slowly changed to amber and apple-green. Then, as the dark strode across the peaks, the shifting tints deepened to the violet of a December midnight, and the wild-folk came forth in that, their day, to live and strive and love and die as we humans do in ours.

Not all were there. It was the fatal seventh year of no-rabbits, and the pestilence which was the scourge of their race lay heavy upon them. The four deep holes in the snow made by the cotton-tail, and the trapezoid tracks of the Northern hare, were missing. Others, too, were absent. At truce with famine, cold and danger, the Seven Sleepers slumbered safe until spring. The bats, gray,

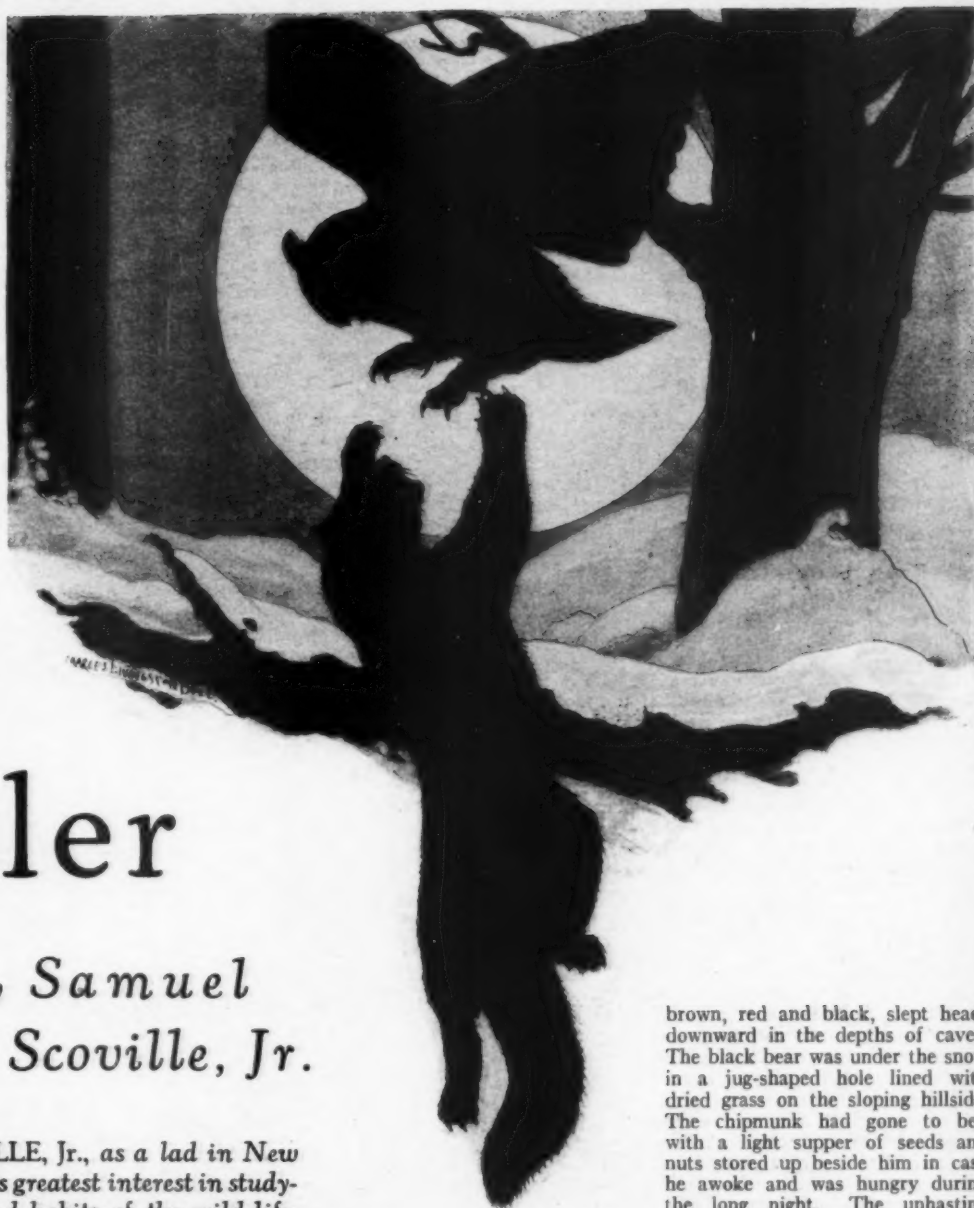
brown, red and black, slept head-downward in the depths of caves. The black bear was under the snow in a jug-shaped hole lined with dried grass on the sloping hillside. The chipmunk had gone to bed with a light supper of seeds and nuts stored up beside him in case he awoke and was hungry during the long night. The unhasting skunk, whose motto is, "Don't hurry; others will," and that loose gray bag of fat, the woodchuck, rolled up in soft warm balls of fur,

were fast asleep in their burrows. The resourceful raccoon slumbered in the depth of a hollow tree and even the smallest of the Sleepers, the jumping-mouse, was abed in a ball of dry grass two feet underground, rolled up in a round bundle tightly tied by a double wrap of his long silky tail, while all the rest of his large family feasted and frolicked above and below the snow like the brownies they are.

The other dwellers on Seven Mountains, furred and feathered, had to play at hide-and-seek with death through the long winter until spring came again.

On the north side of the mountain a little brook, all dumb with snow, ran through a rift of rose-quartz and poured itself into a translucent bowl of the pink stone where it whirled itself slowly against the mosses and water-weed, showing gleams of gold and olive-green and blood-red in its depths. By the side of the pool the vast bole of a dead pine towered a hundred feet sheer, and straight as a candle.

From a hole near the top of the tree, as the first stars showed that winter night, a smoky-brown beast with a white blotch on his breast slipped like a snake down the huge trunk. From the point of its bushy tail to the tip of its blunt muzzle it measured a scant four feet, and it weighed perhaps some thirty pounds. Yet it was



thirty pounds of concentrated death, for that tree-dweller was none other than the great weasel which trappers have named the blackcat or fisher, although it is not a cat and never fishes, but which, for its weight, is perhaps the deadliest animal on the North American continent. At first sight that one seemed harmless enough, with its wide, doglike head and short, round ears; yet its sinister, oblique eyes, gleaming green in the dark, and its fierce array of enormous teeth hedging its powerful jaws, showed why the Indians have named it "*pekan*," which in the Assiniboine tongue means "killer."

Down a hundred feet of perpendicular height the blackcat came head-first, a feat which of itself proved it to be a master-climber, since even the bear and the monkey come down straight trees backward. As the great weasel moved across the snow like a black shadow of death, the full moon, pale as a bubble, rose from the violet and opal shadows above the mountain, deepened to the color of molten gold, and flooded the world with stillness and splendor.

Suddenly the silence was broken by a voice which cried a dreadful question from above the tree-tops:

"Who, who—who, who-oo!" And a shadow drifted toward the great weasel, from whose depths gleamed two flaming eyes. As it came nearer the blackcat suddenly arched its back, and springing high in the air, with its curved claws ripped thick masses of down from the padded breast of the great horned owl, which had been reckless enough to swoop upon the Black Death of Seven Mountains. The clashing teeth of the pekan missed the bird's neck by an inch, and with a squawk of dismay it disappeared in the dark, leaving the beast snarling in the snow and pawing at the bits of down which clung to its claws.

Then, like a hound following a scent, the fisher once more started on its way around the base of the mountain, leaving behind it a trail of squat, square tracks. In the very middle of a stride, it suddenly stopped and listened to a sound which broke the moonlit stillness, insistent, monotonous, as if some one were sawing with a peculiarly dull saw. A moment later, and its black figure proceeded up the mountain-side. Halfway up the slope it came to a stand beneath the spreading branches of a great hemlock whose short green needles were laden with snow. Some forty feet up there showed dimly in the moonlight the blackish-gray body of a big porcupine, the "quill-pig" of the lumbermen, who hate the useless beast because of the trees it kills and the tools it ruins around their camps.

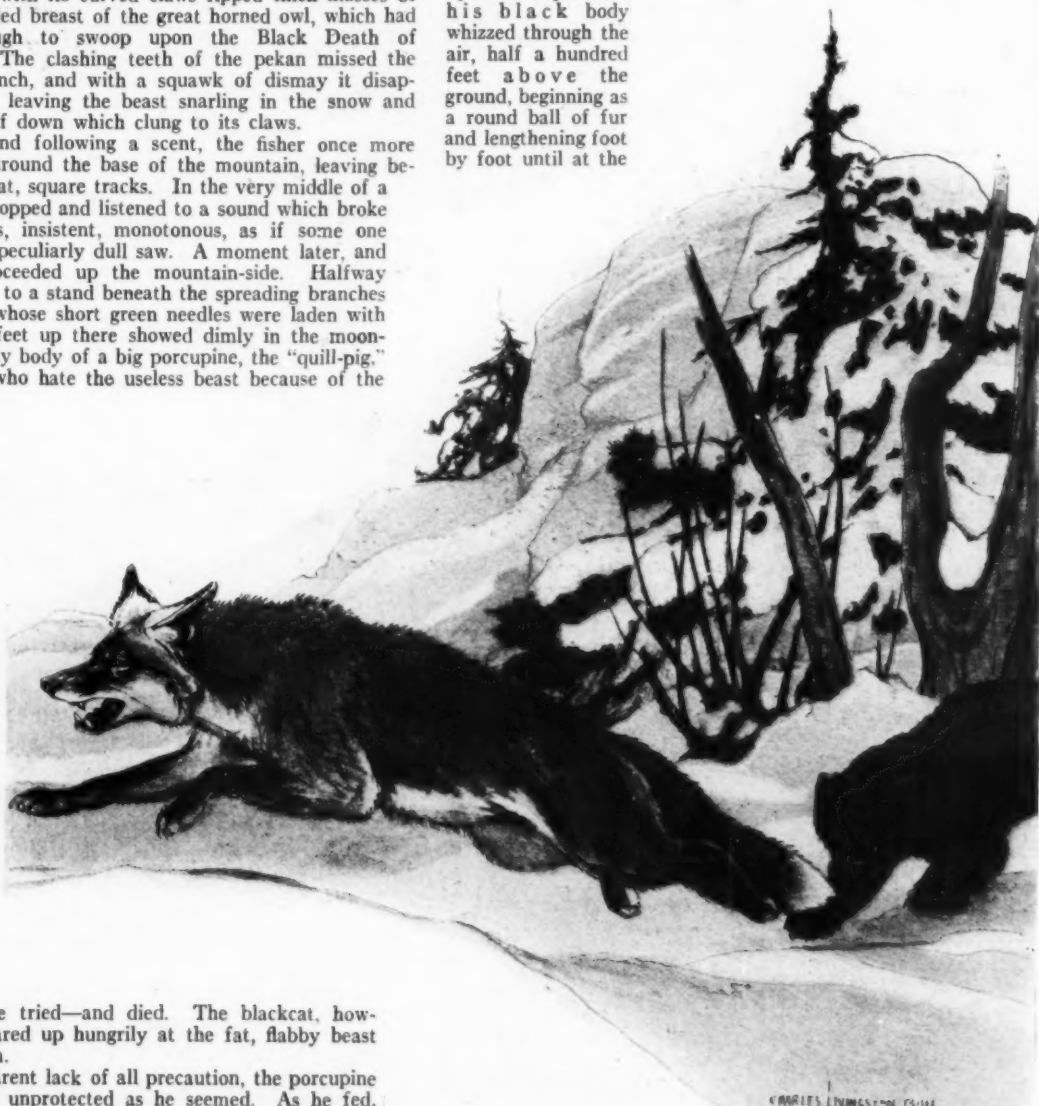
That one steadily ripped its orange-colored chisels through the bark as if it were paid by the hour for doing so. Most of the dwellers on Seven Mountains were willing enough to be inconspicuous, especially when feeding. The quill-pig had no such reticences. His simple gnawing life was open to the world, and he fed as he traveled, noisily and unafraid, for there are few animals indeed who will attack a porcupine. The wolf and the wildcat have tried—and died. The blackcat, however, stopped and stared up hungrily at the fat, flabby beast feeding far above him.

In spite of his apparent lack of all precaution, the porcupine was by no means so unprotected as he seemed. As he fed, he faced up the tree so that his lashing tail, bristling with keen, barbed quills, might drive a multitude of poisoned darts into the face and eyes of any beast rash enough to attack him from behind. Once imbedded in an animal's flesh, they would fester and rankle and work deeper and deeper.

For a long moment the blackcat eyed the unconcerned quill-pig. The black weasel of the thick woods is by some mysterious magic immune to the effect of the porcupine's quills. He can even swallow them in large quantities without ill effect. When lodged in a blackcat's body, they generally work out, and even when they remain imbedded, never infect or inflame the tissues through which they pass, although a dog pierced by them will swell enormously and often die of blood-poisoning.

Notwithstanding his immunity, that particular pekan had no desire to tempt too far the Providence which watched over him. A hundred barbed spikes driven deep into his face and lips would not improve his eyesight, nor his appetite, and he looked around for some way by which to approach that porcupine head-on.

Forty feet away grew a high pine which overtopped the hemlock by perhaps fifty feet. Slipping away from where he stood, below the unheeding quill-pig, the black weasel climbed the far side of the pine as silently as a squirrel could have done, and did not stop until he was perched on the middle of a stout branch which stretched toward the hemlock and far above it. To a human spectator it would not have seemed possible that any animal could negotiate such a leap. The blackcat, however, knew to an inch what he could do. Moving out toward the end of the branch, he shot off into space toward the pine. In a splendid parabola his black body whizzed through the air, half a hundred feet above the ground, beginning as a round ball of fur and lengthening foot by foot until at the



CHARLES LIVINGSTON SMITH.

Just as the great weasel reached him, he sprang away again.



Before the raccoon had reached the crest of the oak, the dark, sinuous shape of the killer was upon him.

crest of his spring, the lithe figure hung, straining at full length as a high-jumper's body seems to hang in the air above the bar. Out and out and down, the great weasel whizzed through the air, and just when it seemed as if he must fall short, his long claws clutched the swaying upper branches of the hemlock, clamped themselves deep into the bark; and in another minute the dull pig-eyes of the porcupine were staring stupidly into another pair that flamed like fire.

The gray body of the quill-pig seemed to swell and double in size as the curved, foot-long quills erected themselves along its back, and its armed tail lashed the air first on one side and then the other, as the alarmed rodent tried to back away from the baleful eyes which flared into his. But it was too late. With a movement sudden and swift as the stroke of a striking snake, the fierce jaws of the pekan shot out and closed like a trap on the unprotected nose of the porcupine. Then bracing his squat legs until the great muscles stood out upon them in iron ridges, the fisher tore the quill-pig loose from its hold, and swinging the body clear of the tree, dropped it crashing through the twigs to fall on a stretch of ice far below. The black weasel reached the ground almost as soon as his victim, and a moment later the life of the porcupine, too stunned by the fall to defend himself, went out under the black weasel's ferocious onslaught. Thereafter, in spite of its armor, he devoured the quill-pig as a man might eat an oyster from its shell, and cached the remainder of the plump carcass in a thicket and went back to his den to sleep the clock around.

Late the next night the killer came back to the cache where he had hidden what was left of the porcupine. As he neared the great hemlock, an indescribably menacing growl came from deep in his throat, as a gray beast, quite as large as himself, slipped

like a ghost from out of the thicket, and for an instant the masked face of a giant raccoon fronted the fire-green eyes of the black weasel.

The raccoon was a grim and solitary old male who had disdained to go into winter-quarters with the rest of his clan at the first snowfall. Scouring the slopes for food, he had chanced upon the cache of the blackcat, and being, like all of his clan, a willing fighter, came forth into the open to do battle for the treasure which he had stumbled upon. For a moment, in the white arena of level snow, the black beast and the gray faced each other like a pair of lightning-fast fighters of the ring. The purse, however, for which they fought in the wan light of that creeping dawn, was the prize of life or death.

It was the black battler who made the first move. Far swifter than the lead of any human boxer, his fanged jaws shot toward the raccoon's throat. Beautifully balanced upon his four slim paws, the gray body slipped the lead of his opponent, and with a half-arm swing, the gray beast slashed the black hide of the fisher

with first one armed paw and then the other, chirring fiercely as he did so. Instantly long red furrows showed against the big weasel's dark hide. Disregarding his wounds, and disdaining to use his tremendous claws, the blunt head of the blackcat shot out once more, trying again for the favorite throat hold of his kind. That time he landed, and two rows of fierce teeth snapped shut on the folds of fur which guarded the neck of the raccoon. For an instant the strange slanting eyes of the black killer flared green into the flaming ones of the raccoon.

It was well for the latter that his skin was loose and tough. An inch nearer to his throat, and the edged teeth of the Black Death would have sawed deep into his very life. Gripping the fisher's throat with his forepaws like small human hands, the raccoon tried with all his strength to hold back the black beast who bored in closer and closer. No raccoon, however, nor any other animal of his weight, can match that grim black beast, the pekan, for sheer strength. In spite of the gray fighter's utmost endeavor, the great weasel's ripping teeth moved closer and closer toward the jugular vein hidden beneath the folds of loose fur. Then with a sudden swift wrench and twist, the raccoon tore himself loose, gashed and bleeding but not seriously injured.

(Continued on page 100)

Mated

By Wallace Irwin

Illustrated by Henry Raleigh

No one knows the little communities of Long Island, in one of which the young couple of this novel come into their own, better than their biographer, Wallace Irwin himself. For in just such a village Mr. and Mrs. Irwin live, in a house that is very old and very lovely, with its fan lights and rose-roofed portico and its old-fashioned garden stretching away behind. And that's why the writer is able to write in the present story so sympathetically of Saug Point.

The Story So Far:

LUCINDA was twelve when she first began to learn—what a daughter of divorce is likely to learn. She lived on Cynthea Court in a Southern city, with her well-loved father Ike Shelby, and her beautiful mother Matalea; and though Matalea made scenes because of Ike's passion for amateur theatricals, and spent a good deal of time in the society of a Mr. Nash—to the child, life in the main had seemed good. Now, however, she discovered that Mr. Weaver, not Ike Shelby, was her real father—and that she was to spend the ensuing six months with the Weavers in New Jersey.

While Lucinda was still a baby, Matalea had divorced Weaver, it seemed. According to the decree, the child was to spend half the year with each parent. Shortly afterward Matalea had married Ike Shelby. Mr. Weaver had never before shown interest in Lucinda, but he had now remarried, and was claiming his "share" in the child.

To Lucinda the sojourn with the Weavers was a nightmare visit to Vulgaria. And at last in desperation she slipped out one night and made her way (after an adventure in New York which was made easier for her by a chance-met boy named Martin Cole) back to Cynthea Court—only to find that Ike and Matalea were about to separate.

Directly after this second divorce Mrs. Shelby hurried to Philadelphia, planning, as even the confused Lucinda knew, to marry Ezra Nash as soon as he had arranged to cast away his wife. For some time now, Lucinda lived with Matalea in a Philadelphia hotel. Indeed, life at the hotel seemed likely to endure indefinitely, though they moved now and then, to progressively smaller quarters—for Ezra Nash made up with his wife instead of divorcing her.

And at length Matalea showed signs of desperation—was seen at the horse-show with Colonel Harbison, a notorious old racing-man. Lucinda began looking at help-wanted advertisements; then Colonel Harbison met with a serious accident in a steeplechase—and Matalea married the apparently dying man at the hospital.

FIVE years later Lucinda was living in a pretentious New York apartment with her mother and her second stepfather, old Colonel Harbison, and Matalea was persuading the Colonel to spend the money requisite for a coming-out party for Lucinda—a party which Lucinda didn't want, but which was none the less given ostentatiously, at the Ritz. Among the college students who "crashed the gate" uninvited was her old acquaintance Martin

Cole. And—so it was that love came to Lucinda. . . . For a time now Lucinda saw Martin almost daily, though Matalea was constantly planning for her, showing her off, seeking a rich marriage for her. Finally came the evening when old Pelig ordered a group of Matalea's guests from the house and made an appalling scene. And afterward poor distracted Matalea fell upon Lucinda, accusing her of ingratitude, and laying her miserable third marriage at Lucinda's door. . . . Early next morning Lucinda left the apartment and met Martin Cole at a Childs restaurant.

"I'll never stay under her roof or his again," she said. "That's why I'm here. Martin, will you take me now?"

"Yes, dear," he said, "this very morning."

But when he went on to suggest arrangements for their wedding, she stopped him.

"The word 'marry' means something awful to me," she told him, thinking of her mother's three failures, and of the many others she had known of in her mother's circle. "It isn't love. It isn't anything. Love—love is beautiful. And marriage—it's hideous, Martin."

And she refused, flatly, to consider marriage: she would go away with him, without benefit of clergy, or—she would have none of him. Martin tried hard to persuade her, but she refused persuasion against what life had taught her. Finally Martin gave in.

"We'll go today," he said.

"Trust God and follow me," she replied. She spoke lightly, almost flippantly. But there was high purpose in her lifted chin and in her starry eyes. (The story continues in detail:)

SAUG POINT was far enough away to have traditions of its own.

True, in common with all Long Island, it "kept" summer boarders and during the hot months set up soda pop, green corn and tomato booths along the State Road. Progress, too, had taken its quota from the farms to supply the frequent gasoline stations. Boy Scouts encamped near by, and working girls, brave in their brothers' knickerbockers and their own silk stockings, had their annual outing in a pine thicket overlooking the Inlet; at Saug Point they thronged the store where Mr. Sage dispensed ice-cream from one counter and kerosene from the other.

Saug Point, in short, was Long Island, less diluted by the city's wash than the settlements farther west on the frenzied State Road. It had a red-front chain grocery, a hardware store, and a City Park where nobody ever went except on Fourth of July, when patriots gathered in the morning around the World War

"Oh, let the poor devil go!" he said. Was he thinking of himself, caged behind a teller's window?

Monument, and in the evening had a block party and took chances in a raffle for the benefit of the local hook-and-ladder company. The Saug Point National Bank Building, of brick with white stone facings, marked a period of city improvement which had languished at birth.

The town was not, in the modern sense, progressive; and that was the thing that had charmed Lucinda's eye when first she set foot there. Tall maples, locusts and ancient pines shaded a street which but seldom trembled to the thumping wheels of mechanical drays. True, there were automobiles, whizzing by on the unpoliced highway, but they were only annoying on Saturday afternoons and Sundays. Otherwise the town moved slowly, in a pleasant dream; red hens scratched behind picket fences; unclassified dogs trotted along beaten paths, smiling and wagging their tails; small boys, returning from school, wrangled delightfully and switched one another with empty book-straps. Only the sight of a wooden foundation, ambitiously labeled, "To Be Occupied by Fletcher Bros. New Hardware Store" affrighted the newcomer with the thought of a real-estate boom. But Mr. Trace, the postmaster, said that it had been there two years. He guessed the Fletcher boys was too rushed to do much onto it this summer.

That was in June, and in July of the next year the foundation still stood, no new nail pulled or driven; it was just an emblem of Saug Point and of the easy-going peace which had fallen upon Lucinda Shelby's days. She was concerned with the physical problems of existence: in January, how to clear the paths of drifting snows; in March, how to chink the windows against northeasters; in April, how to plant the flower-beds, start a vegetable garden. She took her comfort in the winds and the sun, for their little gray house was Spartan. Seasons waxed and waned; corn sprouted, flowered, ripened. That was all there was to life, a giving to nature and a taking away from nature in a course unresisting as the falling of leaves or of snow or of thunderbolts.

A year and a month in the seclusion of another world, only four hours from the Metropolitan Opera House, had worked a change in Lucinda. Cheeks that had been ivory were apricot;

she had gained eight pounds. She dressed in gingham mostly; it was cheap and suited the house, she thought, wondering how many generations of gingham-clads had scrubbed and dusted about the low, crooked hallways and square-windowed bedrooms.

She had found the old house, under high elms, behind a bat-



tered picket fence; neglected hawthorns, gaudy as pink popcorn, were blooming in the yard, and the lilacs were a glory of hazy lavender. What had once been a lawn was a gold-strewn dandelion bed; chickweed, clover and wire-grass disputed their way up a shy old path. Two ancient, twisted box-trees stood like decrepit sentinels before a fan-lighted door.

Swiftly Lucinda decided to love it with something of that romantic passion which then filled her heart. She'd have to fight for it, she thought; well, she'd had to fight for Martin. She'd do the work of two or three women. She'd have it their home, their undivided domain. There might be spiders inside, or anything, but she had made her break for liberty and nothing could daunt her.

THE interior was beyond her expectations. An English actor—urged on perhaps by a romantic dream like her own—had tinted some of the walls, and equipped it partially with electric light, before he failed and had to sell it.

"It's pretty old-fashioned," the real-estate agent had apologized, "but there's an electric pump in the cellar—I guess it'll work—and a pretty fair bathroom on the second floor." His description was honest, she found, for the electric pump sometimes worked, and the house was undoubtedly old-fashioned. It was built in 1702. In the days when passing vehicles were a blessing instead of a curse, a pioneer had erected it close to the post-road. As she saw it first the floors were pleasantly off the plumb, the window-frames ingratiatingly ajamber; the brass-knobbed doors were marked with wooden crosses—"witches' crosses"—nailed there in the days when Cotton Mather's evil hags had flown across Connecticut, across the Sound, to plague the loose-living watermen of Long Island.

"We'll have a garden," she had decreed, but their first summer offered little time for flowers. Looking through one of the yellowish, woggly-glassed windows the following March, when lingering winter flung molten ice across their shaggy acres, Martin stood close beside her, beautifully afraid that she'd be lonely with none to cheer them save only themselves and love. "We'll have a garden," she said again, and he laughed. Of course they'd have a garden. And what did he know about gardens?—pushing her hand up his sleeve and looking deep into his faithful eyes. "Oh, you'll know how to get one if you want it. I know that much."

Lucinda had dreamed of a land far, far away from New York, where they could be to themselves, to work life out in what she called their own way. . . . Fruit-steamers, plying between tropical islands. Ideal, but not for them. She had money in her hand-bag, but it was barely enough to pay their fare to the oblivious, obliterating Caribbeans. Then she thought of Jerry Malone and Saug Point. The place sounded remote. Jerry had promised work for her young man.

Near the Saug Point station where the corn grew down to the railroad, and red hens scratched under stalled freight-cars—"Pan defying Vulcan," Martin had called it—she recognized Jerry Malone, tilted back in a kitchen chair on the shady side of a shed marked "Shaween Lace Works."

He brought down the front legs of his chair and gave them a look which Lucinda would have interpreted as unwelcoming had she not known Jerry Malone. His face was long as a yardstick, but his dark eyes were luminous as he held out his hand, was introduced to Martin Cole and took it for granted that they were married. This was at once easy and hard for Lucinda. But she began lightly, sweepingly, reminding Jerry of the meeting on Fifth Avenue and of his promise.

JERRY blinked melancholy eyes and looked hopeless as a blasted tree. They came on a sorry day, they did, with an injunction on the Works, and not a wheel would turn till Christmas, what with a lawsuit on the ticket and the judge gone fishing. Tight as a drum she's closed, said Jerry, and scratched a favored spot on the back of his head. It was himself that was to blame, but what's a man to do on Long Island, he asked, where you'll find two thieves behind every bush?

"It's too bad, it is, Mrs. Cole," he apologized forlornly.

"Oh, that's all right!"—with a show of cheerfulness. "But please don't call me Mrs. Cole, Jerry. My name's Lucinda Shelby. Why should a woman, just because she's going to live all her life with a man, be tagging herself with somebody else's name?" Honest enough; but Martin's look almost betrayed her.

"You may be right, and then again you mayn't." A certain racial intolerance showed in Jerry's look. "But you're not here to make things hard for yourselves. In Saug Point you're either married or you aint. Take my advice. Start right, or you'll have no peace here."

This was the first compromise with candor. They had come on the wings of independence. They would be free. And Jerry had just warned them to start right, as he called it, or they'd have no peace. He turned to Martin with a manner that was keener and more businesslike, and inquired if he had a head for figures. Lucinda cut in that he was wonderful at everything.

Jerry agreed he might be that in her own pretty eyes. Brides aren't particular. His own, he admitted, thought he could sing, God bless her. But there was a place at the Saug Point National Bank for a young fella who could keep books and run a type-writer. Martin could do both—Lucinda offered this, almost too eagerly. Scratching at the back of his head, Jerry told of a certain Miss Lottie Peck who would be getting married because it was a marrying year—this with a sigh—and so had resigned from the bank and left a desirable void. Jerry would use his influence for Martin.

"Jerry, you old live wire!" Lucinda flattered him. "I'll bet you're president of that bank."

"Only a director," he mourned. "The president's name is Gail Rodney, a hard man, and a Protestant. The job he'll be offering's not much, and the wages'll be less. But it'll keep the blood in your body till the lace works will be opening in the spring."

That afternoon Martin went with Jerry to the bank and left her to roam the old house on the main road; the heavy front door opened with a brass key half the length of her forearm; it went upside-down in a huge wooden lock. Shutters were closed. A delicate mahogany stair-rail showed in twilight; square rooms, tattered wall-paper, lovely pillared mantels, broad, crooked hand-hewn floor-boards. The real-estate man had offered it for twenty-five dollars a month because it was "run down."

Out back lay a fascinating little room full of queer angles and unexpected cupboards. The walls were painted a pinkish buff. There was a curious boxed-in end, and when you opened a little door, you could peer up a narrow oaken stairway, steep as a ladder and worn deep with bygone footsteps. This room, she was told later, had been a taproom in Colonial days when the house had fallen to an inn's estate. The fireplace was of honest brick, with a huge hearthstone and rusty iron hooks jutting from its sides.

"We'll stay here," decided Lucinda, as she mounted the back stairs to peer around at crooked, interesting bedrooms. She found another steep, hidden staircase and bumped her head on her way up to a cobwebby garret where slanting beams had rotted until their surface was soft as old brown velours.

WHEN Martin returned from the bank, he found her in the taproom, sweeping the crooked floor with the nub of a broom.

"What did the hard man and the Protestant say?" she probed.

"Well," he declared rather sheepishly, "as far as I can see, I've joined the money-changers. The rich, ripe fields around here are jam full of producers, making imitation lace, hoeing carrots, building roads. And it's up to me to sit behind a steel cage and dish out money. I'm a middleman. Gosh, here's an ancient Colonial fly-swatter." He unhooked a little wire implement from the wall and began swinging at a group of flies on the windowpane. "Do you know, Cinders, that I've worked out the philosophy of fly-extermimation? They aren't infinite, as people think. There's a definite number of them in existence. If every person in the United States, above the age of twelve, should kill a thousand flies a summer, the species would be exterminated in three years. It's a question of team-work." *Swat!*

"Martin," she coaxed, "did you get your job?"

"Oh, yes, I got it!" He turned, flushed with murder.

"I'm glad!" she cried, and kissed him.

"But just wait till you hear what he offers—fifteen a week!"

"Not bad for a starter. Don't forget we've got nearly four hundred."

"Where did it come from?"

"Daddy. He never wrote me, but he sent some money."

"But that's yours."

"Ours."

Sometimes a light seemed to settle about his Lucinda, consecrating her—an outburst passionate as a kiss.

"Jerry says he can get me a couple of jobs," he offered diffidently, "keeping books for a hardware dealer and a butcher in Bird Harbor. That ought to make fourteen or fifteen more." He laughed and added: "But say! Uncle Gail Rodney's all that Jerry said he was—a hard man, and a Protestant. When I told him I was a Columbia man, he wanted to see my diploma."

"I'll send for it tonight," decided Lucinda. "But I'm sorry



"But how do you get away with the descent of man? You've got Adam and Eve on your hands."

your boss is flinty." Then with a quick thought for him: "Can you work so hard, honey?"

"Don't make me laugh!" he exploded. "I don't care if he's solid marble. The minute we struck this town, Cinders, I began to feel like stout Cortez with the eagle eye. If we can stick it for a couple of years, we'll own the works."

"Do you feel that way too?" she asked. "Martin, this old place is so lovely it makes me want to cry. And do you know what I found up in the attic? A whole shipload of the most terrible furniture! Now, this is my idea: Close up the top of the house, and use just these four rooms. There's a stove in the kitchen, and fireplaces all over. And we can haul down that terrible furniture, get a saw and sandpaper and paint—"

Then came the first misgivings.

"Martin,"—she drew his head to hers as if to listen to the workings of a brain which even love could not reveal to her,— "you'll tell me true. Do you want to stay and do this work? What about your biology? Wouldn't it be better to dig up Dr. Milling, make him take you, do something you like?"

"I like you." Soft and warm in her ear.

"Dear, you always hated the idea of being a middleman."

He held her for an instant, then sat on a rickety chair, his eyes speculative, theorizing.

"Maybe it isn't what I'd have picked out," he mused. "But the means don't count. It's the end I'm after. And that's you, Cinders."

"We wont always be middlemen, Martin."

"You bet we wont. What we want now is a living—food, fuel, shelter; amusement we have. This banking stuff is a stepping-stone. But," he sighed, and smiled, "if I have to handle money, I'd lots rather work in a mint."

Lucinda laughed. "There's the darlinest mint-bed down by the orchard!"

LIFE for the young Coles was not all mint-beds and summer idyls, and if Lucinda never realized its bleaker side, there were neighbors who watched with eyes unaided by illusion. When winter settled slushily over Long Island, Mrs. Gannis, the electrician's wife across the road, watched through bare boughs and wondered how the Coles got along in two rooms—for she had peered in, on an errand, and noticed that the young house-

keeper, to save heat, had moved the bed into the taproom and was serving meals in the most direct possible manner, from the kitchen stove to the kitchen table. Mr. Case, proprietor of the Red Front Store, scrutinized Mrs. Cole carefully as she slopped along in rubber boots, guarding her packages under a man's yellow slicker; as a merchant he was glad that the Coles hadn't asked for credit; as a humanitarian he wished that he might grant it to them indefinitely. That winter the Saug Pointers were a little sorry for the Coles, and a little suspicious. They were outlanders. Where did they come from?

As if in tune with that furtive hostility which lurked in Saug Point's smiles, a letter from Matalea Harbison found Lucinda one morning when she went to the post office for the papers. No letters had ever come to them, except from the local tradespeople; yet here was one from New York, and in Matalea's familiar backhand.

It was written on many sheets, full of illegible words and intemperate expressions. Matalea had put detectives on Lucinda's trail—dear Pelig had been so anxious about her, and had left no stone unturned. They had found them at Saug Point in July. Why, oh why, had they done this insane, wicked, sickening thing? Pelig's detectives had searched every marriage bureau within a hundred miles of New York and found no record of their license.

And if Lucinda chose to run away with this hoodlum, the letter went on, why had she chosen to live with him like a common woman of the streets? He wasn't good enough to be a servant in her house, yet she had made the mistake of letting him come as an equal. And see what he had done!

"But I'll forgive you even that, Lucinda, if you'll come home," the letter concluded. "I've told everybody that you've gone to France to study. But so long as you choose to live with this blaggard,"—Matalea's spelling was never her strong point,—"or so long as he forces you to live with him, you are lost to me. If you should ever wish to come home and leave him *absolutely out of your life*, remember, Lucinda, I'm your mother. I have endured much from you in the past, and am willing to endure more. But you must come *willingly*, prepared to ask my forgiveness and poor Pelig's, who has *suffered so much* from your behavior."

Lucinda took this letter home and tore it into small bits, then burned the scraps in her kitchen stove.

Her mother's attitude of horror and shame assured her that her secret was safe. If she had told everyone that her daughter was studying in France, she would tell no one that her daughter was living in Saug Point with a man whom her mother despised. Poor Matalea, so respectable, so careful!

The queer message made less impression on Lucinda than it should have, perhaps, and only lurked in her mind like one of Matalea's scoldings in the days when she was entirely under her mother's domination. It just added a little to the girl's self-consciousness, to her feeling that there were unspoken questions behind the neighbors' kindly smiles, and that Saug Point was sorry for them, and a little suspicious.

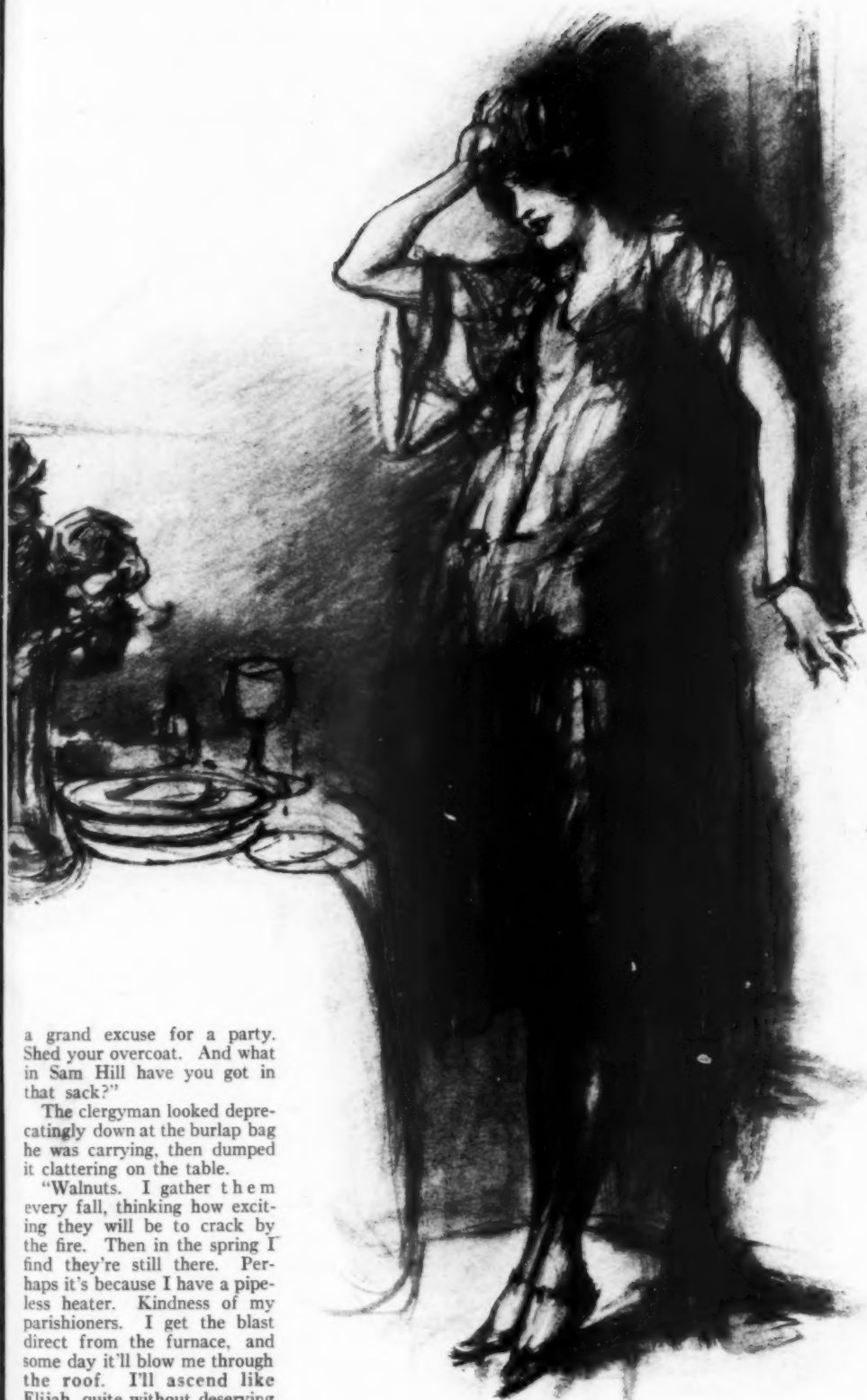


BUT one Saug Pointer did not feel their sorrow or their suspicions. The Reverend Doctor Corless wasn't born in Saug Point, and maybe that made the difference; an outlander, he had come there fifteen years before to share crumbs with the mouse in an ancient and drafty church which had been English before the Revolution, and Episcopalian since. His body had grown fat and his soul sweet in adversity. Strict sectarians disapproved his unconventional cast of mind; and because he was eccentric, he envied and admired the unaccountable couple who preferred to live in the two rear rooms of the old gray house.

Lucinda had set him apart. She disliked preachers, but he did not preach outside the pulpit. He was a humanistic, round-bellied man who loved his fellows, his pipe and, upon occasion, his nip. A nonconformist, in the Middle Ages he might have laughed down the chief inquisitor.

On a fine white night when the stars shone like lanterns through the Spanish lace of wintry boughs, the little fat clergyman came puffing through the snowdrifts. The long, low, narrow kitchen-wing, its arch-topped chimney spouting smoke, its small square windows yellow with light, presented a picture, perhaps too sentimental, of cottage comfort. But Corless was a sentimentalist and enjoyed it. Through a glowing pane he could see Lucinda, a comfortable gray tom-cat in her lap, her head bent over a busy needle. Martin, all hunched up, a cigarette dangling from the corner of his mouth, was jotting figures in a mottle-backed book.

Dr. Corless sighed, smiled and knocked briskly. Martin, his hair wild, opened the door, grinned, cried, "Hello, Doc!" and pulled the family friend into the halo of their kitchen stove. "You're



Out of breath, she
leaned panting
against a door-
frame. "We can
own the world!"
she cried.

Regular summer palace
effect."

"Let's crack nuts,"
suggested Lucinda,
"and I'll make coffee."

"Come on!" rejoiced
Dr. Corless. "It'll keep
me awake for a week."

Martin bounded down
the cold cellar stairs in
search of a hammer,
while Lucinda reached
among the shelves for
a canister. It was none
too full. . . . While
they cracked nuts and
the coffee steamed on
the stove, the two men
fell into the clinch of
their perpetual argu-
ment. Corless mentioned
a knife-duel between
a Saug Point Italian
and a Saug Point
Czecho-Slovak. He had
put the men in his
Ford and taken them to
a hospital across the
island.

Racial hatred, plus
alcohol, had caused the
quarrel. "And they went
at it in the unconven-
tional manner of the
low-brow."

"Unconventional!"
snorted Martin. "Who
ever told you the low-
brow was unconvention-
al?"

"Well, my boy,"
smiled Corless, "just
try one of them in a
drawing-room."

"Oh, I'm not talking
about ditch-diggers, en-
tirely. I mean the In-
ternational Society of
Low-brows. The Pan
Moron State. People
with nothing but hats on
top of their eyebrows.
They may be driving
trucks or gambling on
exchange. But they're
always conventional.
The lower an or-
ganism, the closer it
sticks to the creed of
identical behavior. Sal-
mon spawn by the mil-
lions, and Hindus swal-

low their religion, a nation at a time. Politicians and preachers
go maundering about the average man. Bunk! The average ant.
Have you read Will Beebe on the army ant? A blind bug, wound
up by clockwork, built with a pair of nippers to eat a hole through
anything. He drives ahead, nips off a piece of wood or flesh—all the
same to him—and gets himself killed carrying it back to the nest."

a grand excuse for a party.
Shed your overcoat. And what
in Sam Hill have you got in
that sack?"

The clergyman looked depre-
catingly down at the burlap bag
he was carrying, then dumped
it clattering on the table.

"Walnuts. I gather them
every fall, thinking how excit-
ing they will be to crack by
the fire. Then in the spring I
find they're still there. Per-
haps it's because I have a pipe-
less heater. Kindness of my
parishioners. I get the blast
direct from the furnace, and
some day it'll blow me through
the roof. I'll ascend like
Elijah, quite without deserving
the honor. By George, how
comfortable you are here!" He

glanced into the taproom with bed, bureau, chairs painted a cheer-
ful yellow. Lucinda's work. Everything as neat as wax.

"Cinders is royalistic in her taste," declared Martin. "She
must have a summer palace and a winter palace, just like a
czarina. We're now in the winter palace. In spring she'll
open up the dining-room, and we'll move the bed into the parlor.

Dr. Corless, fragments of shells strewn over his shabby clerical waistcoat, was picking a nut and smiling—symbol of the cheerful philosopher. Lucinda was glad to hear them going on like this. They struck heartily, their claws sheathed.

"Go to the ant, thou sluggard!" Dr. Corless quoted.

"Yes." Martin sprang again into the argument. "If you want to be conventional or anti-human, go to the ant. But evolution means differentiation." Lucinda smiled, for Martin was beginning to stutter, as he did usually in the throes of argument. "It doesn't mean being a herd. It means being—being yourself."

"Lucifer believed that," remarked Dr. Corless. "For further particulars, see Milton."

"There goes the theological attitude. Dragging in myth. But of course we can't meet on any common ground, because I'm an evolutionist and you're a theologian."

"My dear boy," said the clergyman, looking up with his wise twinkle, "if you'd seen as many men as I have choking their spirits with dust and ashes, you wouldn't call me a theologian. As a matter of fact,"—he paused here, as on the brink of an indiscretion,—"I'm an evolutionist myself."

"But how do you get away with the descent of man? You've got Adam and Eve on your hands."

"Christ wasn't concerned with Adam and Eve," said Dr. Corless. "And He never met Darwin. But He wasn't born to deny the undeniable. If I had preached that the world is flat and that people were hatched all in a day, like so many frogs, probably I'd still be occupying the pulpit of St. Swithin's in Fifth Avenue." Resentment came over his face, just for an instant, like the shadow of a cloud.

"There you go!" spluttered Martin. "Ruining your own argument. You're anti-herd, anti-conventional. You're civilized beyond the intellectual quantity-producers. You've cut out the Neanderthal specimens and become *homo sapiens*. It's inconvenient, but it's right."

"Not so fast, my boy." Dr. Corless, to whom Lucinda had just passed a cup of coffee, held up a comfortable hand. "Am I right? I'm sixty-two, and you're what—twenty-three? We old fellows begin to slump down into grooves, I'll admit that,—gosh, Lucinda, that coffee's hot!—but as we rot, like old trees, we begin to mingle with the all-consciousness, to feel the infinite in our muddled way. There is a law."

"Not a man-made one," said Lucinda, dreamily stirring her cup.

"Human and worm and bird," disagreed Dr. Corless. "Individualism, where does it get you? To jail or to a throne. Kings and Kaisers don't count. Neither do captains of industry and religious fanatics. . . . The old Stylites, climbing to the top of pillars, sitting cross-legged for twenty years, ossifying, mistaking a state of coma for a state of exaltation—poor, silly egotists, thinking that by behaving like inferior apes they were getting a little nearer to God. Even the buzzards laughed at them."

"Religion has done a lot of harm," threw out Martin.

"I think it has," agreed Dr. Corless. "For my part, I don't take much stock in religion. But I believe in the Kingdom of Heaven."

Martin doubled his fist under his chin and studied the minister with a sort of speculative admiration.

"You're a strange man for a parson," he said.

"Well," chuckled Dr. Corless as he thrust his thumb deep into the bowl of his old black pipe, "you're a strange man for a banker, if you don't mind my saying so."

Martin laughed, and agreed that he was.

"No, the older I get," resumed the clergyman, "the more I believe you can't defy the mass unless you're a prophet. But no true prophet is against the law. You mustn't believe that, my young intellectual. Good is good and sin is sin; you can't get away from it, in spite of Anatole France, God bless the old pagan! Some day I'll show you a few examples in this neighborhood. . . . Poor pin-headed humans who start out to be prophets and find they're only satyrs."

Chapter Thirty-three

OFTEN and often that winter, even in the pioneer austerity of their house, the leaky roofs, the drafty doors, the inadequate heating, Lucinda would stop and hug herself, thinking how fortunate they had been in their bold experiment. Blessed be he who invented the word *honeymoon*! They were in a sweet moon of their own, quite unapproachable from the world well lost. Sometimes with a shudder, childishly pleasant, she would think of Pelig and Matala and the Weavers, ogres from whom she had escaped in her own way, by her own cunning. Sometimes she was shocked

at her coldness toward a past which she had left without regrets. It was almost unpleasant to think that a girl could live to twenty and beyond and have cast no roots to bleed in the transplanting.

Sometimes she would regret the Southern city where she was born, the quaint negroes, the jolly Butler children, the noisy gang around Miss Martincastle's school. Had she been permitted to stay there long—to stay anywhere long—she might have taken root and let her affections flower. And of all her youth she but regretted Daddy. Her poignant desire for him was her first pain in this new-created Eden. She wanted to sit beside him under a tree, talking nonsense; and after a while she would tell him everything, beginning at the beginning. . . . She would tell him in such a way that he would understand and know that she had not acted lightly, but had chosen her own path, followed her ideal.

For Lucinda, although she did not admit it to herself, needed a confessor.

IN early summer, when the hawthorns burst into bloom again,—“they pop so loud I can't sleep,” as she described it to Martin,—another regret came stealing into her Eden. Had she done right in bringing her man to Saug Point and putting him behind the barred cage of a bank? Almost the first time they met he had confided in her that Dr. Milling had promised to take him to the tropics to work as a naturalist among exotic birds and butterflies. Often she had imagined the scene, like a wild design in chintz with blue-winged parrots pecking among fronded boughs. Yet here he was at Saug Point, always cheerful and considerate, but growing a little bent and abstracted in the figures which he clicked all day on an adding-machine and penned all night into a butcher's ledger. Had she chosen right for him?

One Sunday afternoon they took a walk through a tangle of scrub-oak along the East Spring Road. He went beside her, his arm around her waist, his look contented; but there were inscrutable dreams behind the blueness of his eyes. Then right before them something fluttered, light as an animated sigh—fluttered, soared and settled on a bough.

"What a perfectly gorgeous butterfly!" she cried, and on an impulse snatched Martin's cap and threw it over the frail, unearthly thing. An instant later she held it between her hands.

"Martin, you must look!" She was all excitement. "Such a butterfly as never was."

"Oh, let the poor devil go!" he said. But he came slowly over, retrieved his cap, and like a man still engaged in his own thoughts, smiled and remarked: "It's a big fellow. But it's not a butterfly at all."

"What is it, then?" she rejoined ironically. "A beetle?"

"No. It's a moth."

He took it from her, and with the greatest delicacy held it so that the peach-blow should not be dusted from its wings, which stood out, wide and batlike with two little gauzy windows reflecting faint sunlight beneath.

"How do you know it's a moth and not a butterfly?" she asked breathlessly.

"The antennæ," he replied. "A butterfly's antennæ have little knobs on the ends. These are straight and fluffy."

"Well, it's a lovely moth," she protested.

"It's a whacking big specimen," he admitted. "But not very rare. I've caught 'em in Central Park. Mounted dozens of 'em."

"Let's mount this one!" she suggested.

He held the little creature for an instant, regarding it with studious interest; then abruptly he released it, saw it flutter away among the leaves.

"Oh, let the poor devil go!" he had said. Was there impatience in his tone? Was he thinking of himself, caged behind a teller's window? Lucinda lacked courage to ask him, but the next day she borrowed a New York telephone directory from Mrs. Gannis, across the lane, and when she had found the address of Dr. Cyrus Huntington Milling, she wrote him a letter. She merely told him that Martin Cole, in whom he had been interested, had found work in a country bank, but was still anxious to join an expedition into the tropics. Quite without Martin's knowledge or consent, she mailed it and afterward wasted many a walk to the post office.

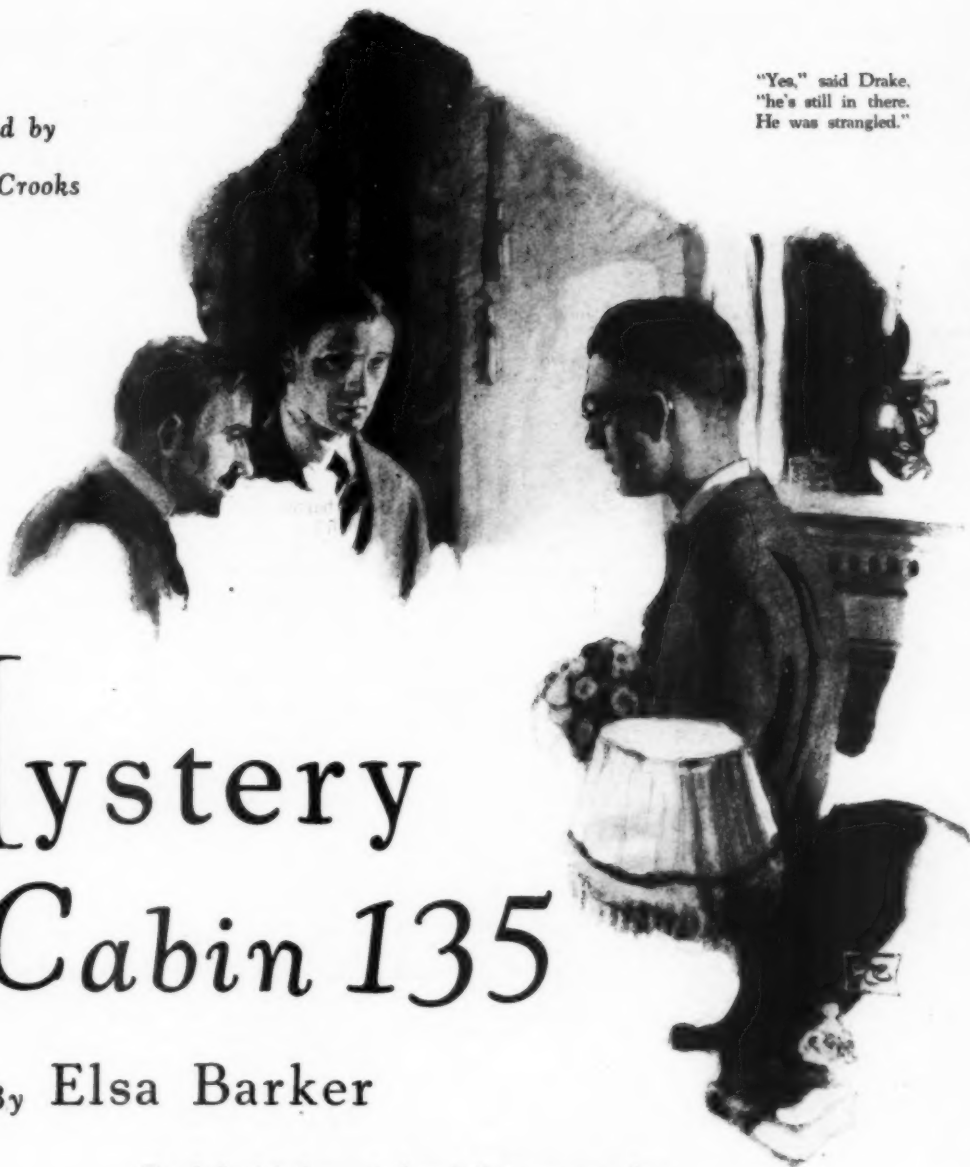
One morning Lucinda sat in the funny little kitchen which jutted so abruptly from a corner of the house and rammed its nose into the rolling hillside. She was wearing one of the pink gingham aprons of her own invention, and made a picture against the Dorothy Perkins roses which framed the window, dripping crystals from the recent shower; a skillet, simmering juicily on the oil-stove, was beginning to boil over, so she set it half off the flame and glanced up at the alarm-clock over (Continued on page 118)

Illustrated by
Forrest C. Crooks

"Yes," said Drake.
"he's still in there.
He was strangled."

The Mystery of Cabin 135

By Elsa Barker



I SHALL always thank my lucky stars that I stopped in the Rue Moncey to see old Luther Briggs, on my way to catch that boat-train for Boulogne. I did not see him—nothing would have persuaded me to look behind those curtains; but my half-hour in the next room was the beginning of an adventure.

At the end of my year of European travel—most of it spent quietly in Paris—it was not affection for that dapper little old expatriate American, Luther Briggs, which made me think of passing those last moments with him. It was the memory of a promise unfulfilled. The Sunday before, at an afternoon reception, he had come up to me, holding out his yellow clawlike hand with the large pearl ring on the little finger.

"Mr. Howard!" he said impressively. "Will you promise to come and see me, before you sail for New York? I shall be going back myself very soon. Think of it—going back, after twenty-five years! I left America—yes, probably before you were born, Mr. Howard."

Psychologists have declared that women do not reach conclusions as the result of logical processes of thought. Logical processes, however, are demanded in a story of detection, and some of the best detective stories written in America are the work of women. And there you are! An excellent example of what a woman can do with a detective story is offered here—one of a notable group that Elsa Barker is writing for you.

He stretched up his thin little neck, which reminded me of a plucked chicken's, and cackled over his joke at my inexperienced youth.

I thanked him for the invitation, and said that I would call—without fail.

Then I watched the quaint creature, with his bushy black wig and dyed mustache, as he bent to kiss the hand of his hostess, and tiptoed out of the room in his tight patent-leather shoes.

Yes, an unusual—some said a mysterious—personage was Luther Briggs. He seemed to know dozens of nice women. Even those who called him an old reprobate behind his back continued to invite him to their parties—because he amused them, I had supposed. But that was before I met Dexter Drake.

It was about one o'clock on my sailing day when I left my cab and luggage at the door in the Rue Moncey. When I asked the *conciierge* to direct me to the apartment of Monsieur Briggs, she seemed unduly excited. She even ran after me, halfway up the first flight of stairs, breathlessly repeating her direction.

When I rang the bell of the Briggs apartment, the door was opened by a *gendarme*. I had expected to find an eccentric establishment, but hardly a Paris policeman acting as butler.

I asked for Mr. Briggs, and the *gendarme* told me to come in. We stood in a little entry, hung with pictures.

"Monsieur Lagrange!" the *gendarme* called.

A MIDDLE-SIZED, middle-aged man came briskly into the entry from a room at the right. After learning my name and errand, he took me into the handsome little *salon*, where another and younger man—tall, dark, and straight as an arrow—was standing by a window. There was something disconcerting in the first glance this younger man gave me. Then I noticed a third man, who was drawing together the portières between the *salon* and a smaller room at the left, in which he remained—now concealed from us. It was all so fantastic, I did not realize for a moment that Monsieur Lagrange was introducing me to the tall man by the window.

"Mr. Paul Howard—Mr. Dexter Drake." He was speaking in English. "Fellow-Americans, I believe."

The tall man came forward and shook hands with me. He was looking at my hands in a peculiar way.

"That's all right," he murmured to the Frenchman; then:

"I'm sorry to tell you," Drake said to me, in a formal tone, "but Luther Briggs was found this morning at nine o'clock—murdered."

I was staring from one of them to the other. "Good heavens! Is he—" I glanced with a shudder at those portières.

"Yes," said Drake, "he's still in there. He was strangled—by some one with very short fingernails. There's only one slight abrasion of the skin, made by the nail of the second finger of the murderer's left hand. Nothing has apparently been stolen. His ring is still on his finger; his scarfpin, his cuff-links, are in place. Monsieur Lagrange believes he was killed for revenge."

"Do you know if he had enemies?" Lagrange asked me.

I shook my head, telling them how very slight my acquaintance had been with the dead man, just how I came to be in his apartment then, that I was catching a boat for America, the *Veerdam*, and had only a few moments.

When I mentioned the *Veerdam*, the Frenchman glanced sharply at Drake, who let it pass.

I had taken for granted that Lagrange was a detective, but Drake's position was not clear to me at first. Suddenly it dawned upon me. If I had not been so excited by the murder, I might not have blurred out the question to my fellow-American:

"But—Mr. Drake! Are you—working on the case?"

The two men again exchanged glances. Then Lagrange said, dryly:

"My dear Drake, I shall have to assume that you know your own countrymen better than I do."

"That's why you called me in, isn't it?" the other retorted.

Lagrange nodded; then he made a little outward gesture with both hands—a gesture of resignation to the inevitable.

I should not have seen the drift of their cryptic looks if a messenger had not hurried in, handing Drake a thick envelope of the Holland-American line. So Dexter Drake was sailing on the *Veerdam*! The inference was obvious. Some clue must lead to that ship.

"You're in luck, Monsieur Drake," the messenger said. "I've got you the cabin next door, which was free—Number 137."

Drake must have read my thoughts. But he returned to the story of the murder, as it would doubtless appear later in the newspapers.

HERE it is, briefly: No servant slept in the Briggs apartment, the work being done by a woman who came at nine in the morning and left at three—the same woman for five years now. It was she who had discovered her master dead in his chair. The *concierge* had told the police that Briggs had gone out to dinner as usual, a little before seven the night before, returning alone about nine, looking worried and angry. At half-past nine a tallish man with a black beard, whom the *concierge* did not recognize, had gone up to the Briggs apartment.

"Every window," said Drake, "was found this morning fastened on the inside. The physician believes that Briggs was killed before midnight. If we can accept the statement of the servant that her passkey has not left her possession for a moment during the five years she has carried it, the murder was probably committed by the person of the black beard—which may, of course, have been removed on the stairs going up. Black beards are so

common in Paris, they make a convenient disguise for any man or woman—"

"Woman!" I gasped.

"Man or woman," Drake said. "Anyhow, there are two persons whose acquaintance you and I, Mr. Howard, are about to make."

Lagrange again threw out his hands—in resignation.

"I'll be frank with you," Drake said to me. "As you have seen me here, and will see me on the ship, and as you seem to have drawn your own inferences a few minutes ago in regard to my sailing, your cooperation will be simpler for us than—"

Yes, I could finish the sentence—simpler than my possibly indiscreet efforts to find out for myself what he was doing on board.

At Lagrange's request, I jotted down the names of several persons in Paris in whose houses I had seen Luther Briggs. Of course the detective had let me in because he wanted to question me. They had found the dead man's address-book, containing not less than a thousand names. They had also found bank-books, and his will, leaving everything to a small American college. . . . A childless old man, apparently, who had come to a horrible end.

"Would you like to see Mr. Briggs?" Lagrange asked me suddenly.

"N-no." My flesh grew cold at the very thought.

Drake glanced at his watch.

"We must go," he said, rising. "My cab and luggage are just round the corner in the Rue Blanche. If you see me on the train, Mr. Howard, do not recognize me, nor on the tender at Boulogne. When the *Veerdam* is in motion, but not before, please come quietly to my cabin—Number 137. I may arrange for you to share it with me."

He spoke like a man in authority, taking my assent for granted, and well he might. Then he was gone.

Lagrange followed me to the door of the apartment, past the *gendarme* in attendance.

"A remarkable man," he smiled, "your compatriot Dexter Drake! He was taking a vacation; but off he starts for home at a few hours' notice—because of his old friendship for me and the Paris police. Without him—really, I should not have known which way to turn in this case. You're an extraordinary people—you Americans! Trusting each other at sight! The great Dexter Drake—inviting a stranger to share his cabin! I congratulate you, sir."

To say that I was thrilled would be expressing it mildly. Remember that I was only one year out of college, still in a foreign land, and having my first contact with real crime—in there behind those curtains. Strangled! There was something primitive about it—daring and primitive.

THE train was halfway to Boulogne when it occurred to me that but for Drake's hint about the fingernails, Lagrange might have thought for a moment that I was myself the murderer, according to classical adage returning to the scene of my crime! I am a "tallish man;" but I wear my nails rather long, and I couldn't possibly have grown them overnight.

What clues could Dexter Drake be following? Would the criminal be on the *Veerdam*? A man—or a woman! But what motive could anybody have for killing that dapper and bewigged old gentleman?

Of course I should never know now why Briggs had wanted to see me. Perhaps for a letter of introduction to somebody in America. So absorbed was I in the case already, that the lovely landscape of northern France in June sped past my window almost unregarded.

On the train I saw nothing of Drake. But when I went aboard the tender which took the passengers from Boulogne to our ship lying at anchor, there he was—standing near the rail, scanning with seeming carelessness the face of every man and woman. His keen dark eyes passed over me also with no sign of recognition.

Aboard the *Veerdam* I went upstairs to the lounge, past the wireless office, where I saw Drake talking with the operator.

Not till the ship was in motion did I go down to his cabin. As I turned into the short side-corridor, I saw a tall, angular woman just ahead of me, leading a toddling child into the room next door to Drake's—Cabin 135. "In luck," that messenger had said.

Drake was in 137, waiting for me. He closed the door, then motioned me to the sofa, while he sat down in a wicker chair facing me.



"I," she repeated, "—afraid? After my experiences I don't think I could be afraid of anything or anybody—alive or dead."

"I suppose, Mr. Howard," he said in a very low tone, "you're breathless with excitement. I should have been—at your age. And of course you're wondering just who and what I am."

"Y-yes," I admitted.

"Well," he said, "you might call me a free-lance detective, consulted by individuals and the police when—yes, when they don't know what else to do. Of course I avoid newspaper fame like the pestilence. It would interfere with my work. On this ship, for instance, the captain knows me, also the wireless operator—but nobody else."

Suddenly Drake raised the index finger of his left hand, cock-

ing his ear in a listening attitude. From Cabin 135 came the laughter of that child I had seen in the corridor. It sounded gruesome to me, in the circumstances—the laughter of a child.

Drake was looking at me fixedly, and I thought he was weighing some problem. What penetrating eyes he had—as if he could see greater depths in me than I had ever explored myself!

"You would draw suspicion to us, Mr. Howard, if I should leave you suspecting every passenger on this ship. You couldn't help it. Whereas, if you know who I'm watching, you'll behave as you did on the tender—admirably. If you had saluted me there by even the bat of an eyelash, or upstairs by the wireless

office, I should have told you nothing more about this case. Don't think I'm talking down to you because you're young, but—"

"Your profession is a dangerous one," I said. "Even now, if you'd rather be free of me, I'll go back to my own cabin, and hold my tongue for the rest of the voyage."

Drake nodded. "I'm sure you would. But the casual-seeming companionship of another man is precisely what I need for this business on board. It has—peculiarities."

He leaned back in his chair—waited a moment.

"Yes," he said suddenly, "I'm going to tell you. Among the papers in the pocket of the strangled man we found a plan of the *Veerdam*, with Cabin 135—a single cabin—marked off, with the price of it in francs. Nurse Ellen Diver, the woman next door, paid for it herself, in cash, at the Paris office of the Holland-American Line; but on that same day Luther Briggs drew the exact amount from his account at the bank of Morgan-Harjes. The child, a little boy, belongs to an American named Baxter, who engaged the woman in there, a trained hospital nurse, to take the child home. Nothing unusual in that job, of course, for a trained nurse going to America. It's often done. If we hadn't found something *else* in Luther Briggs' pocket, I should have thought he was planning to engage a future passage for himself in Cabin 135."

"He told me last Sunday he was going to America," I said.

"Yes, yes." Drake then handed me a *petit bleu*, as the Parisians call their pneumatic letters. It was addressed to Luther Briggs, and it was typewritten—signature and all.

"Dear Sir:

"Have secured passage on that Dutch boat tomorrow. As I informed you yesterday, F. had a perfect right to confide in me. You have done a great wrong, sir. But at the psychological moment I shall assume command. Will you dine with me at seven tonight—same place? I shall endeavor to convince you that my point of view is one that you *must accept*.

"(Signed) M."

"That," said Dexter Drake, "was probably the dinner from which Luther Briggs returned at nine o'clock last night, looking worried and angry. Half an hour later he was visited by the 'tallish man with a black beard.' Nobody saw the man leave the house. He could have gone away unobserved after ten, when the *concierge* went to bed. And black beards, as I said this morning, are very common in Paris."

"But that nurse in there," I whispered, "is tallish, and she's angular, with shoulders like a man."

Drake rose. "You mustn't stare at her. I have learned that two men, whose surnames begin with M, engaged late passage on the *Veerdam* at the Paris office. A few minutes' talk with them, on general subjects, will reveal to me which man wrote that letter. As you see," he smiled, "the police were very busy between nine o'clock this morning and the hour when you called on Luther Briggs. Shall we go now and see about changing your cabin?"

Perhaps, if those two Mr. M.'s, and the nurse, and the murdered man, had not all been American citizens, and if Drake had not worked before with the Paris police, somebody—even myself—might have been held in Paris for the inquest. I don't know. Drake told me later that he had once sailed for India on the ship with a murderer, when he was working with Scotland Yard, and got his man.

Just before dinner that evening I strolled into the lounge, upstairs. I think my heart missed a beat, for there sat that nurse on one of the large sofas, with the child in her lap.

Near the door I stopped, to light a cigarette. I should have turned and fled—only I remembered just in time that I must not seem to avoid her. She was not in nurse's uniform, but wore a well-cut gray traveling-dress, a coat and skirt with a white blouse.

Assuming an air of indifference, I sat down not far from her. As anyone will naturally look at a pretty child, I could observe the nurse without appearing to do so. Whatever she was, she had chosen an innocent-seeming way to leave France—as a baby-courier!

He was a pretty little boy, with curly brown hair, but his clothes were tasteless and cheap-looking—a blue woolen dress trimmed with red braid, a blue woolen cap and red shoes. He looked more like an immigrant child than the child of American parents, and that curious impression was reinforced by the large silver beads round his neck and the Italian breastpin of red



Drake went over to Miss Diver and the sleeping child.

coral. I remembered a melodrama I had seen the year before, in which there was a stolen child who wore a blue dress trimmed with red braid. An absurd association of ideas.

But my interest was centered on the nurse herself. She might have been thirty-seven or -eight, and her thick, lusterless black hair was worn in two long braids encircling her head—like a crown, above her wide, high forehead. Her figure, in that severely cut gray suit, was like a man's. But what fascinated me and made me shiver slightly were those large, strong, ringless hands of hers, with the closely trimmed nails. I could not help thinking of them in contact with the chicken-neck of old Luther Briggs.

Really, I thought, I must not let my feelings get the better of me. But I left my half-smoked cigarette in an ash-tray, got up and carelessly strolled out, toward the deck.

The ship was rolling a little, and I was beginning to be conscious of the steady vibration of the engines. How ridiculous—if I should be seasick!

On deck, the keen salt wind revived me somewhat.

Then I saw Drake, swinging round the corner of the forward deck-house, in company with a medium-tall but roundish man.



"Here, Inspector," he said. Then he took from his pocket a small magnifying glass.

Drake wore a cap now, and he was smoking a cigar. How finely he carried himself—like a military man! As he passed me, he nodded, but he did not stop, nor ask me to join him.

Was Drake already on the job? Was that man with him one of the Mr. M.'s who had engaged late passage on the *Veerdam*?

I went down to the cabin I now shared with the detective, and in a little while he came in.

"Have you found the man?" I asked.

He shook his head. "That's not the person who wrote the letter to Briggs. Not all men write as they speak; but the fellow I had in tow just now would have written 'the right time'—not 'the psychological moment,' and he would never have threatened, or promised, to 'assume command.' The real Mr. M. is a prig—a pretentious fellow who travels with a light-weight typewriter, perhaps to record his valuable thoughts."

I must have been white around the mouth, for Drake observed kindly that the Channel *was* rather rough. It wasn't—not really. But Drake's remark made it easier for me to say that I didn't feel hungry—would just order some tea and toast in the cabin.

Drake turned at the door, gave me a bright encouraging smile, and went in to dinner alone.

I was thoroughly ashamed of my squeamishness, for I knew Drake suspected it was only a physical reaction from my first experience with murder. But in a man of twenty-two, and a football player!

Several times I heard Nurse Diver moving about in her cabin.

The detection of crime, I told myself sternly, was a science cold and impersonal as mathematics. I might be young, as Drake had reminded me, but I wasn't going to be a fool. About eight o'clock I went down to the dining-saloon and ate a good Dutch dinner. Then I wandered about the ship, but saw nothing of Drake. So I went to bed. About midnight he turned on the light in the cabin, where I had been sound asleep. His brows were knit. He was not in a talkative mood.

When I awoke the next morning, there was no sign of him. It was not until after the English passengers came aboard at Plymouth that Drake, meeting me on the deck, suggested that we go down to our cabin for a quiet talk. Closing the door, he said:

"Now tell me the Paris gossip about Luther Briggs. LAGRANGE's wireless messages contain some curious features. Briggs paid the French tax proportioned on his modest rent; but he had much cash in many banks, and (Continued on page 150)

You Can't

IMMEDIATELY following the completion of his lively romance, "Bitter Apples," Harold Mac Grath and Mrs. Mac Grath abandoned their lovely garden in Syracuse and fled to Biarritz, where, at the moment of writing, they still are, and from where Mr. Mac Grath sent the present story, "just to show," as he writes, "that there's nothing in this thing called 'European influence.'"

Illustrated by
W. B. King



"Jenny Killian," Dope replied. "The fines' skirt in the world."

ENVELOPES. Don't you remember how you used to pounce upon the broad white envelopes with embossed titles in the upper left-hand corners, that came in the morning's mail? You still open them as they come, but without enthusiasm; for right well you know that you are going to be invited to a banquet (where nobody laughs any more) or to some kind of a sale; or some ancient sweetheart of yours is announcing her twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, and naturally you are expected to dig up something in silver.

But these ordinary envelopes, bought already stamped, written in lead-pencil, thumb-marked, disreputable! Never yet have you opened one of these and been wholly disappointed. You have

found everything in these chirographical outcasts—tragedy, comedy, inexpressible romance, "mute inglorious" Miltons.

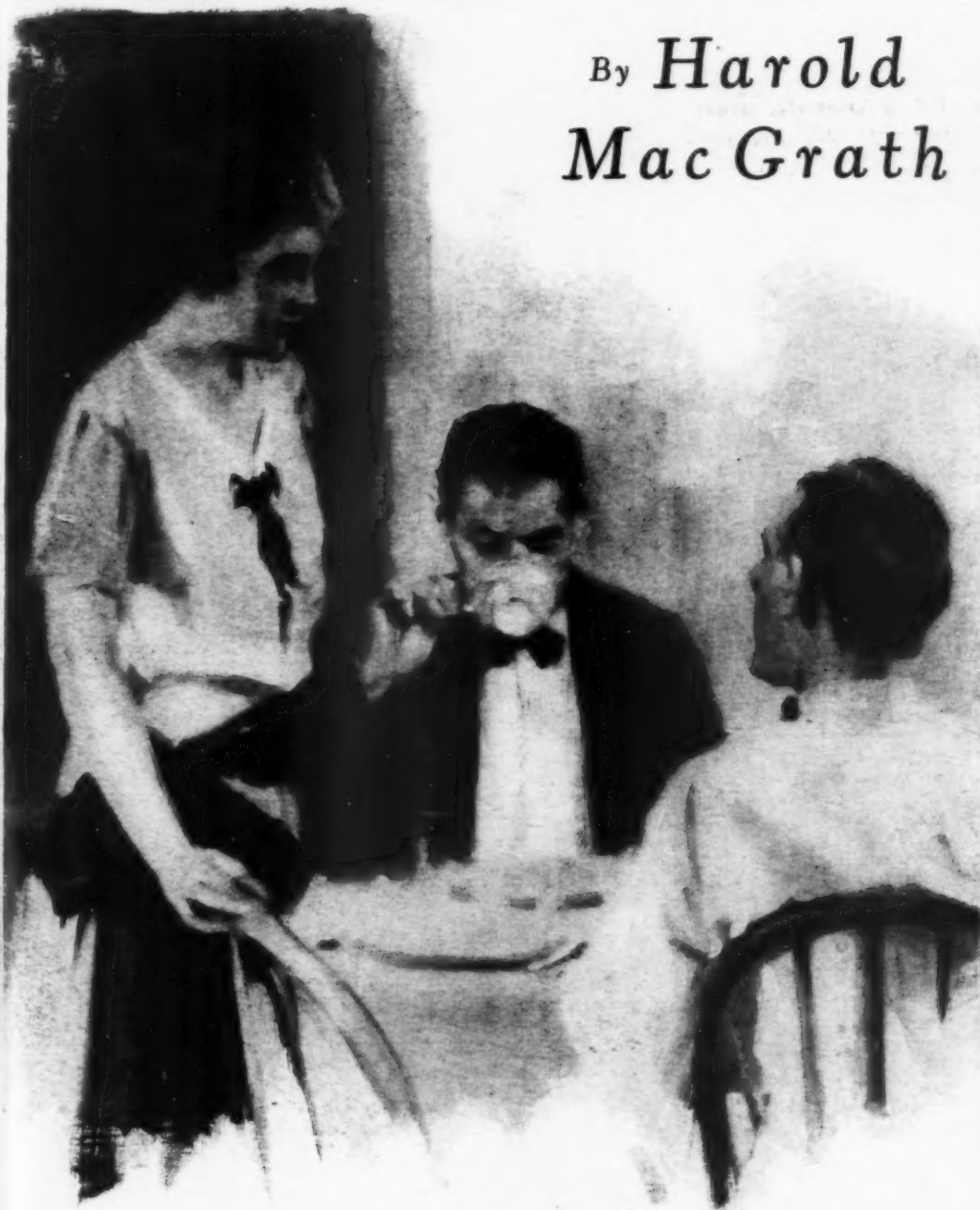
So it is with human envelopes; the gold lies within the shabby. Of course there will sometimes be a beautiful envelope with a beautiful content; but in this noisy jungle of ours, they are white orchids.

Certainly, upon seeing Jimmy Conway, *alias* Dope, for the first time, your initial thought would be: I should not care to meet *that* chap after dark!

Jake Killian trained prize-fighters and managed them. His camp was in the foothills of the Adirondacks. He believed in training his man so far from New York that junkets were

Always Tell

By Harold
Mac Grath



impossible. The result was, he had on his string a middle- and a light-weight, real contenders, clean, healthy fighting-machines and formidable box-office attractions. Tommy Sands and Willie Donlin drew big purses and put away their "cuts" against that rainy day inevitable in the lives of ring-men.

The camp consisted of a comfortable frame house on one side of the road, and a roomy barn on the other. This barn had been converted into a gymnasium, the stalls having been made over into bedrooms, where the handlers and pork-and-beaners slept.

Dope's true patronymic was unknown to most of those who knew him. He was called Dope because he was a peripatetic World's Almanac on all matters of fistiana. Killian fed and

clothed him and gave him a little money from time to time. Whenever Sands or Donlin was matched with some comparatively unknown scrapper, Killian consulted Dope. In ringside phraseology, Dope would point out the merits and demerits of the challenger; and nine times out of ten, his information would be correct. Hence, the nickname. . . .

It began on a May day. A few compact white clouds sailed northeast across the blue. The willows were golden; the spruce and balsam were developing tender bloomy greens among the rusty. Emerald green were the fields that rolled down from the forest rim. The air was full of magic; it got into the blood—sap was springing up in all things that lived. Far away to the north were the mountains where patches of snow gleamed whitely—the stubborn fingers of winter sullenly giving way.

The boys were gathered at the south end of the barn, roughing it with the handball. They were barking joyously like young dogs.

"Soak it, ol' scout!"

"Atta boy!"

Dull of eye, Dope sat on the stone wall. He was wizened and rat-eyed and flat of chest. First-off, he repelled you; you had to get used to him to dissipate the suggestion that it wouldn't be wise to come upon him in the dark. Thus it is that Fate stamps humanity with her ironic heel. Within that gargoyle of a

body burned the soul of Galahad, striving desperately to get out, to express itself. Galahad, blind and swordless!

It was hard work to become friends with Dope; but once the contract was made, it was bound with hoops of steel. Perhaps, of all those who knew Dope, only Killian's niece suspected the imprisoned thing that beat itself against invisible bars.

Dope talked the argot of the ring; for the life of him, he could not have said ten words without committing mayhem upon some of them. But he read "Treasure Island," "Lorna Doone," "Rodney Stone," "The Three Musketeers," "The Tale of Two Cities"—any good book he could lay his hands on. Of course there had to be fighting, or a book was worthless to him. One

of his pet heroes was *Umslopogas*, that bloody old Zulu of Rider Haggard's tales. Dope was educating his mind, but his tongue was a truculent, unconquerable rebel. Once Jenny Killian had found him sniveling. He had just come upon *Sidney Carton's* end. Shamed at being caught in such unmanly weakness, he had confessed to a bad cold in the head; and Jenny, full of understanding, had given him some camphor pills, never again remarking the incident.

DOPE'S tongue was a double-edged rapier—in ring dialect, be it understood. When the boys were throwing the medicine balls listlessly or were sparring without the needful pep, a few words were sufficient to turn them into angry bulls. As they dared not ease this rage by pummeling Dope, they took it out on one another, to the secret delight of Killian, whose curses often fell short. Only one could put a button on Dope's rapier—Willie Donlin: the deeper the irony, the wider grew Willie's Irish grin.

Dope's tongue was clean, as a rapier is clean: no smut was bandied about while he was hard by. This, because Jenny was always bobbing up unexpectedly. Thus Dope not only stirred the man-lust in them properly, but also kept their looseness of speech in check.

So today he sat hunched on the stone wall—a living gargoyle, Irony personified.

"Hey, Willie, whata yuh think that is—a dishrag?" he cried from a droop-cornered mouth.

Willie grinned and sent the ball with such violence against the side of the barn that Sands muffed the rebound and had to step off the cement into the soggy soil to recover.

"How's that, Count?" jeered Willie.

Willie no longer called the other Dope. He applied military and noble titles, because of the bookish tendencies of his baiter. Singularly enough, these jeering epithets pleased Dope and were one of the two things that stirred him to smiles. The other was Jenny. If he saw her coming down the road, half a mile away, he smiled.

No man ever wished to be sublime for his own sake. Thus Dope was always dreaming of doing mighty deeds, of making tremendous sacrifices. He was perpetually assuming the character of some adored hero. He was *D'Artagnan* or *John Ridd* or *Sidney Carton* when he was alone; and was always wondering what Jenny would say when she learned that it was he who had pulled her out of *The Cardinal's* clutches, or the den of the *Doones*.

The handball game went on; but before its allotted time was up, Dope became conscious of some one standing on the far side of the wall within arm's-reach. He turned and saw a young man in the early twenties, in a rough suit of clothes, a flannel shirt, a sport cap and a pair of muddy tan shoes. Killian's camp was four miles from the railway.

Some new pork-and-beaner, thought Dope contemptuously—a cream-puff, too. Suddenly he asked himself where he had seen this pale face before. For Dope had the memory of an elephant; he never forgot a face that interested him. He had seen this boy somewhere.

"Wall, stranger?" he drawled, imitating Mr. Hart. Dope was a movie fan.

"Any chance of a job around here?" The young fellow had a pleasant voice.

"Sure. We hire 'em as they come. Which hand is the mule-kick in?"

"What?"

"Which is the haymaker, or have yuh got two?"

"Oh! Why, there may be a kick in both. That's the point. I want to find out."

Dope laughed derisively. "Yuh will if yuh stick around here!"

"Where will I find Mr. Killian?" asked the stranger, unabashed. He even smiled, revealing a set of white, handsome teeth.

"Don't yuh like your teet'? Why waste 'em on this dump?"

"Oh, I sha'n't mind spending a couple—if I get what I want."

THE smile vanished; and instantly Dope recognized the quality of the expression that succeeded; he had seen it in the ring hundreds of times. The expression—swiftly come and gone—stirred his respect; and his bright, ratlike eyes began to absorb the stranger. What he saw—though he could not have described it—was a face that would have been handsome and manly but for the pasty skin, bloodshot eyes and bloodless lips. Dope knew all the signs of dissipation, and he saw in the stranger's face the initial marks of the Broadway route. The body was straight and the frame generous. Dope went into primary mathematics;

up to the mark this guy ought to tip the scales at a hundred and sixty; just now, if he weighed a hundred and twenty-five, he was lucky. No ordinary pork-and-beaner, this one; even with the hangover, he had class. And where had he seen him before?

Shot and crisscrossed as his mind was by the imprint of great moments in fiction, Dope scented a plot. He swung around and off the wall.

"C'mon, baby," he said; "I'll take yuh straight to papa. An' listen, he's the wisest guy in the game. So don't pull no boner, or yuh hikes right back where yuh come f'm. Whata yuh think y' are, Poicy?"

"Welter."

"Where'd yuh fight last?"

"Coming up the road."

"Whazat?"

"Fighting to see if I was ready to lose a couple of teeth."

"Amachure, huh?"

"Yes."

"All right; I'll steer yuh into Pops. An' mind the footwork. Gotta be fast to get by Pops."

Killian's desk stood in the corner of the living-room. In another corner was a fine player-piano. Over all was the sign-manual of the woman. There is something indescribable about the way a woman can deftly feminize a man's room.

Killian was a big man, raw-boned, clear of skin and eye. In his youth he had been a cowboy, and he still possessed the cowboy's contempt for cities. He went to New York or Boston or New Orleans, wherever the ring was; but immediately after the fight, he herded his men directly back to camp, which sprawled over six hundred acres and was farmed by local men on a fifty-fifty basis. Once in a while, however, because he understood men thoroughly, he took the boys down to New York, when there was no serious fight in the offing, and let them run loose for two or three days. A few theaters and a few pool-games at Doyle's, and some candy benders constituted this wild dissipation. Back in camp again, the candy and the cake were sweated out of them by strenuous work-outs, and life resumed its normal run.

POPS—few called him Jake—sat at his desk, sorting a fat bundle of press-clippings.

"Hey, Pops, here's a new choppin'-block for Sands an' Willie. Amachure welter. Was last knocked out by Kid Hooch. Thinks he's got too many teet', an' wants to gamble a couple."

"All right, Dope. Here, take these clippings and look 'em over. See if the line on the Wop is all right."

Dope took the clippings and departed, grinning slyly.

The stranger then had a queer sensation. The cold blue eye of the ex-cowboy ran up and down him with almost the feel of a hand.

"Huh. Young man, you've got the wrong camp. The man you're looking for is Billy Muldoon. This is no health-resort. I'm a pug exploiter."

"I want to be licked every day for three months—for board and lodgings. If at the end of that time I can't give as good as I get, give me the gate and I'll walk back to where I came from."

Killian chuckled. "That's a brand-new one. Licked every day for three months, huh? What's the big idea?"

"I'm offering my body, not my reasons." But the young man smiled as he spoke.

"You're no fighter."

"That's been the trouble for the past five years."

"So you were a scrapper before that date, huh? At what?"

"Football."

"Where?"

"Have I got to tell you?"

"You sure have. No mysteries on this lot, no ringers. We know all about you, or we don't know you at all."

"Yale."

"Can you prove it? You don't have to stand up; sit down."

The stranger sat down, and for a while stared at the floor. "In confidence," he said.

"Well, I don't say no to that. But mind, I'm not hiding any crook. When I give a job to a man, I must know him all the way back to his first teeth. If I like your story, I'll keep my mouth shut; if I don't, you beat it."

Half an hour later Killian rose. His eyes twinkled, but his face was grim.

"Sands and Donlin live here; the rest of the boys bunk in the barn. You'll find it comfortable. I'll check up your yarn,



"You don't belong to this camp," Jenny pursued. "You're not the sort who let pugilists batter them about."

and if it dovetails, I'll see that you get all the lickings you require."

"Thanks."

"What do you want to be called?"

"Johnny White."

Killian laughed. "Johnny White it is. Toddle out to the barn and make yourself known. I'm feeding you to Willie Donlin; and if you're not sick of the job inside a week— Well, we'll see. But put the diamond-hitch on this: no loafing, no stalling; you fight or you beat it. Breakfast at seven, dinner at one and supper at six. Johnny on the spot is the word around here. Go over and make yourself known. Say I sent you."

Killian turned his chair to the desk and became absorbed in the unsorted clippings. The stranger understood that he was dismissed. Slowly he left the house and walked toward the barn.

Dope entered noisily, his beady eyes alight with excitement.

"Hey, where's that guy gone?"

"Sent him over to the barn," said Killian. "Why?"

"Lookit what I finds on the back o' one o' them clippin's. The minute I lamps him, I knowed I'd seen him somewheres."

Killian read the reverse side of the Saturday sport page of an evening newspaper. He called into service his poker face: it was a good one.

"You're a million miles away, Dope. Look alike, maybe, but that's all there is to it."

"Yuh mean to say—"

"Sure. White just gave me his stuff."

"Mebbe he was lyin'."

"Did you ever lie to me and get by with it?" Dope grinned. "Well," continued Killian, "the boy told me the truth. Jenny's been feeding you too many 'Deadwood Dicks.'" Killian tore up the clipping and dropped the bits into the basket. "Toddle over to the barn and get things started for six two-minute rounds. I want to see what this bird has got."

Dope saw his jaw harden. The next act would be a call for the police. But the unexpected happened.

"All right, Pops." Dope wasn't the least fooled by Killian's attitude. Those clippings had come in with the morning's mail, and nearly all of them were fresh. The thing had happened Friday, and this was Wednesday of the following week. Of course it was young Bromley, and Killian had his reasons for keeping mum.

White's frame was sturdy, but it was clothed with flabby flesh, and the skin was dull. Killian saw at once that the boy had had on the gloves before. On one side of the ring was a four-plank grandstand, and here Killian perched himself.

"No hitting in the clinches, Willie," he called. "This is a try-out."

"All right, Pops," said the grinning Donlin. He was almost a head shorter than White. "Where d'yuh want it?"

"Anywhere but the stomach," answered White cheerfully.

The pork-and-beaners glowered at the newcomer. They always glowered at candidates for pummelasia, for it generally meant that one of them was to go.

The gloves were "pillows," and stung and shocked but mildly. When either Sands or Donlin was in training for a bout, the regulation gloves were in order, and the set-ups earned their beans.

The young man who called himself White suddenly found himself in the center of a leather shower-bath. Donlin hit him everywhere but in the foot, as the saying goes, with everything but the pail. All through the six rounds, however, White grinned—a mobile grin at the start, a set grin at the finish. He went into the shower-room with a red eye (black tomorrow) and a split lip as the result of the try-out. These were the visible signs. Inwardly he was in agony; his lungs ached, and his back; his knees seemed to be disjointed; his hands were numb and useless. The shower revived him to some extent. To be licked every day for three months!

"What's he got?" asked Killian of his lightweight.

"A left that's a wiz; but he needs thirty pounds o' beefsteak to put the kick in it. What's the big idea? This guy aint no beaner; he aint no pro."

"He comes up to be licked ninety days straight," said Killian. "And no coddling."

Everybody within hearing laughed. There was a lot of coddling in this camp, where cruelty to human beings was taught scientifically as well as relentlessly! But while they laughed, the men scented a mystery. Killian wasn't managing a health resort.

"Well, how d'yuh feel?" asked Dope, as, later, he and White started for the house in answer to the supper bell.

"I've been drawn through a lopsided knothole."



"Soft's a new egg. A week'll toughen the shell. Hungry?"

"Nothing since morning. Two doughnuts and a cup of coffee."

White strongly disliked the appearance of Dope; but he warmed toward the little man for his proffer of companionship.

Dope, as a matter of fact, was boiling and bubbling with tinted romance. This was just like it was in a book; and he was "gonna eat it up." He wasn't friendly toward the newcomer; he was merely friendly toward the opportunities the young man offered in the realm of romantic dreams.

The dining-room contained two tables, large and small. At the large table sat the handlers and "chopping-blocks," the proletariat of the camp. Mind you, there were no loafers about; you worked at something, and you worked hard, too. Dope guided his tentative protégé to a chair and sat down beside him.

By the window was the small table, and at this Killian, Sands and Donlin seated themselves. White indifferently noticed a vacant chair.

Supper consisted of prime beefsteak, baked potatoes, spinach, bran muffins and coffee. There was rich milk if you wanted it. White could not remember of having ever tasted steak so good. He had a juicy bit impaled upon his fork and on



the way to his eager mouth, when the fork paused in midair—Jenny Killian came in and sat down in the empty chair.

"A young woman in camp?" White whispered to Dope. "Who is she?"

"Jenny Killian," Dope replied in kind. "The fines' skirt in the world. An' put that in your coco right now: Killian was a cowboy oncet, an' packed a gun. If she speaks to yuh, O. K.; but if she don't, keep on walkin'."

White, whose heart was filled with bitterness against all women, sullenly resented the presence of this girl. He hadn't come here to be polite to anyone, to open his book of etiquette, to tip his hat. He had come to Killian's, boiling with vengeance; he wanted to live hard, feel hard, wanted no soft tones on this canvas. A woman about, to dodge or to kowtow to—he didn't like it. No one at the Killian table had risen; this took a grain or two out of the bitterness.

Ten times during the meal he caught himself staring at Jenny, and each time he pulled his gaze aside angrily. For Jenny—to quote Dope—was an eyeful: Diana in sport clothes, tanned, vibrant, sweet-voiced (for White heard her frequent laughter), her red-brown hair bundled carelessly on top of her head. White grew

puzzled. The girl did not seem to fit in. Probably it was this fact that attracted his eye; certainly it was not because she was woman.

After supper Dope led him to the front porch, and together they sat down on the bottom step. He was informed that Jenny taught the district school and had for three years, and that from one end of the county to the other folks liked Jenny Killian. White pretended an interest he did not feel. His eye pained him, and his lips were puffed and dry; he longed for his cot in the stall; but tonight he must wait for his cue. Dope extended a pack of cigarettes.

"Smoke?"

"No, thanks."

"No cigs, huh?"

"Smoked my last this morning."

"F'r how long?"

"Three months."

"All right. We'll boil that an' the hooch outa yuh. But nobody c'n boil the yelluh out."

"There's a lot in me."

"Uh-huh! Ku Klux?"

White laughed. "Not as bad as that. I'm yellow under my own hat."

"Sure. Aw, take a peek at that!" Dope waved his hand toward the rolling hills, bearing the aftermath of day on their crests. "Lookit them stars. Smell th' air."

Surprised by this unexpected side-light, White asked: "You like scenery?"

"Ye-ah, even w'en it's on a shirt-front," answered Dope dryly. "The first week I gits here—four years ago—I quits cheatin' myself at Canfield. Some day I'll be a dam' fool an' go to church. Now yuh know why Sands and Donlin are on top. Yuh can't do no dirty work in a clean place like this."

"Why do they call you Dope?"

Patently Dope explained.

"What's your real name?" White was becoming interested in this odd specimen of humanity.

"Reginald Vere de Vere—same as yours is White. Ye-ah."

Footsteps. Both men turned their heads.

"Hello, Dope."

"Hello, Jenny. Meet White—some new pie for Willie to play movies wit'."

White got up and took off his cap, inwardly cursing himself for having done so.

"I hope you'll like it here, Mr. White."

"I think I shall."

Dope chuckled audibly and lit a fresh cigarette.

Jenny proceeded to the road and swung off toward the north.

"What made you laugh?" White wanted to know.

"Yuh think yuh'll like it here! Aint that a wow? Wait'll Willie gits interested in yuh. Wait'll yuh git one o' Sands' five-inch pokes in the slats. Oh, baby! He thinks he'll like it here!"

WHITE was up at five-thirty the next morning, because of Dope's insistence. He was so lame that he never wanted to get out of bed again. But he recollected in time what this adventure signified. So he set his teeth and thought hard upon the objective point. He would reach it if it was the last thing he ever did on earth. The May dawn was chill and the shower untempered; but when he reached the breakfast table, he was hungry.

Dope outlined the daily routine. The afternoons would be open, though White was warned that Killian had a trick of suddenly shifting schedules. In the morning there would be odd jobs about the place until ten; from then until noon, work-outs with

the gloves, with an hour's rest before lunch. In the afternoons there would be hikes across country—optional to all but Sands and Donlin.

At ten-thirty White took his second drubbing—smiling. Killian knew all about that kind of smiling. This boy was in torture, and it would take the length of two weeks to graduate this torture to a negligible point. But would he stick it out fourteen days? That remained to be seen. Anyhow, Killian decided that he was going to enjoy watching this particular evolution.

At three-thirty Killian, Sands and Donlin started off for the two-hour hike. White joined them. He was muscle-wise, as they say. The harder he plugged, the sooner his aches would diminish in their intensity. But the stride today was too swift for him. At the end of two miles he dropped out and sat down on a boulder, his lungs on the verge of bursting.

What a wreck he had made of himself in these five years! He set his chin in his palms, his elbows on his knees, and ran back across these five mad years. Was he yellow? He had never been yellow at college. He had played the game there. Could yellowness be acquired, implanted? Two weeks of this life would settle that question.

SHE had laughed—the woman he had spent his love and money on. Laughed, when Gorham had knocked him down in the Ritz supper-room; laughed, when he had got up and lunged at Gorham, only to be knocked down again; laughed, with the emerald bracelet he had given her flashing on her white wrist. And he hadn't understood until he awoke in a police cell the next morning, where he had been haled on the charge of drunkenness and disorderly conduct. Played him for the poor fool he was, and all the while in cahoots with that shyster broker Gorham!

The Great White Way; jazz and liquor and show-girls! A father who had given him enough money to land him in jail and who then had disowned him!

"No son of mine!"

He had left the house, perfectly assured that somehow he had got into the movies and that this was the end of the first reel.

"Feeling pretty bad?"

He turned his head, positively astonished to behold Jenny Killian, a lunch-box and some books under her arm. He stood up because the act was a part of his inheritance.

"No wind any more."

"That'll come back," said Jenny. "Johnny White—is that your real name?"

"No."

"You don't belong to this camp," Jenny pursued. "You're not the sort who let pugilists batter them about."

"I'm going to be, for a while. But you don't belong, either."

Jenny laughed. "Oh, yes, I do. Killian's my uncle, and I adore him. Let the boys understand you, and they're as good as any. My uncle knows men, and only the right sort ever step inside this camp."

"How do you know I'm the right sort?"

"I don't; but he does."

He saw her face now in the clear daylight. It was strong, yet exquisitely feminine. She had approached him and was talking to him exactly as one of his own kind would have done: easily, confidently, without a mark of diffidence. His own kind! he thought bitterly. Five years had come and gone since he had mingled with his own kind. Under the tan of her satiny skin was a ruddy glow; and her eyes were as blue as any he had ever seen. She was almost as tall as he was.

On her side she saw handsome youth under the film that was the beginning of false old age. She had noticed this sign on the faces of most men who came to camp to witness the workouts when Sands or Donlin was getting in shape for a match—followers of the ring. There was a difference, however: upon the faces of these visitors the film was set. Here there was a chance of youth and renewed health absorbing the sign. In fine, the breed was different.

"No use waiting for the boys to pick you up. Suppose we get on toward camp?"

"All right."

"How long will you be here?"

"Three months, I expect."

"Then we'll see a lot of each other. So, if it will ease your mind, I'll tell you that I shall never ask you any questions. You've got by Uncle. He has some good reason for taking you on. He never makes any mistakes."

"He sha'n't make any in mine."

She understood exactly what he meant. "Let's get on. Take

it easy; no hurry. And don't mind about me. I can outwalk anyone in camp except Donlin. That boy has more stamina than any human being has a right to."

"I'll O. K. that."

"Hurt you?"

"Some."

"Another thing," she said, as together they fell into an easy stride. "No matter what happens, never cry 'enough.' It's a cruel game, and that's its first law. In two weeks' time you'll like everybody or you'll hate everybody."

"I don't believe I shall hate you."

"You haven't got to hate or like me. I'm in a ringside seat and don't count."

She was like no other girl he had ever known, either in life or in books. She did not belong to the world in which he had formerly moved; she did not belong to the world he had but recently left. Had she been of either, his interest would have remained unstirred. Neither was she what he would have designated as middle-class. He was conscious of astonishment; he could not label her. He sensed her presence as he did the air, clean and invigorating. And here she was, in a prize-fighters' camp, as out of place as *Lone* would have been, living among the rough gladiators in the *Suburbium*.

The highway wound in and out of virgin forests and around crystal lakes. Suddenly a vista caught White's eye, and he stopped entranced. Beyond the break in the forest he saw a lake, lying like a newly minted coin in a green purse. Above, compact white clouds were forming profiles and castles and heavenly fortresses across a background of intense blue.

"God seems very near, doesn't He?" said Jenny softly.

"Thanks for reminding me."

"Do you like books?"

"Very much. I've neglected them, too."

"I haven't much of a library, but you're welcome to what I have. Probably you've read most of them. 'Lorna Doone'—that kind."

"I shall be very glad to have something to read."

So atmospheric effects stopped him, and he liked good books! This young man couldn't be all bad, was her thought. Her uncle read mankind, and had no use for books. None of the fighting men read anything but the sporting pages of newspapers. She had succeeded with Dope; but he was as yet only skimming the top of the pot of gold. Later, when they became better acquainted, she might pleasantly talk of books with this young man.

Jenny was lonely; but she admitted it only in her prayers. She longed for the companionship of young women, and the longing was denied. The village accepted her for what she was, a school-teacher of high merit, to whom childhood flew as the needle to the magnet. Shrewd and saving, the district school-commissioners accepted Jenny despite her sordid background—the prize-fighters' camp. Socially the village ignored her. Folks were willing to trust her with their children but not with their silver.

Killian, manlike, because of Jenny's ready laugh, did not suspect the tragedy that stalked his niece. Jenny taught because she wanted to, not from necessity. Every dollar he had in the world—and Jenny knew it—was hers for the asking; and rough but simple man that he was, he considered this sufficient to pay his obligations to his brother's daughter. Had he known that Jenny had been affronted and often slighted, he would have torn down the village with his bare hands.

Here, then, was a situation as old as the hills: a young woman seeking companionship and a young man trying to patch up his broken illusions. Delectable propinquity!

DOPE was sitting on the porch steps as they came over the knoll toward the house. Everything within him seemed to tighten suddenly, as if a cold hand had thrust itself into his breast and squeezed. Seeing a stranger with Jenny always did that, so there was no novelty in the sensation. But yonder was a new kind of stranger—Jenny's style. He had never really feared the average camp visitor; but this son of the man who built railroads across the last wildernesses, who counted his millions as Jimmy Conway counted his dimes!

These days folks weren't quite human to Dope. He was always enduring them with the likeness of characters out of the few books he had read. He was sensible enough to realize that only a fairy-tale miracle could put Jenny within his reach. But there was this dream: that he and Jenny would grow old together here, that to the end of time he would (Continued on page 158)

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The Unfaithful Window

A few years ago a novel swung like a comet across the literary heavens, and a score of critical astronomers claimed the first discovery. It was named "Eric Dorn." Other books followed, among them a remarkable collection of brief tales, entitled "1001 Afternoons in Chicago," and by now Ben Hecht was established as a novelist, and in a class by himself. Here is one of the very brief tales that have added much to his fame.

By
Ben
Hecht



"Five floors down,"
whispered Larry,
"and a little to the
left. Do you see it?"

Illustrated by E. R. Kirkbride

THERE have always been windows. Long ago the Greeks amused themselves with a story of love flying out of a window. Then there was the window from behind which Hero watched Leander through a long swim—not to overlook the window that the devil stole from the church of St. Michael in Padua. This was a very important window and caused a war.

Of late, however, windows have lost their significance. There are too many windows. In the city of New York alone there are easily a hundred million windows. Perhaps a billion. Nobody has ever counted them.

The city is like a tireless tree that grows windows. When the moon shines on them, you can almost imagine that the windows

are blossoms. Which is a rather romantic notion, but nevertheless an appropriate one, for it enables us to introduce a very romantic young man whose name was Lawrence Stiles, and who was very particular about the sort of neckties he wore. This was not because he was wealthy, but because he was young—a much better reason. The most interesting thing about this young man, however, was the fact that his life was centered around a window. Which at once disproves the statement made above that windows have lost their significance. But generalities are always vulnerable.

It is necessary first to eliminate the thousands of windows through which young Mr. Stiles, during the course of his days, stared at the world. There were the windows of his bedroom, of his barber-shop, of his friends' homes; the windows of the elevated and subway trains, of stores, restaurants and sometimes of literature. Through all these windows Mr. Stiles was wont to throw an idle glance at life—was wont to observe casually that there were many busy faces grimacing behind other windows.

But arrived in his office on the twenty-first floor of the Railway Exchange Building, Mr. Stiles' casual attitude toward windows—his own and others—underwent a radical change. Mr. Stiles' office on the twenty-first floor inclosed a rather sordid round of realism having to do with railroad overheads and depreciations. But the window of Mr. Stiles' office was another matter. The window of Mr. Stiles' office (it wasn't really his office but belonged to the Company) was a peephole upon Paradise—an enchanted lens through which young Mr. Stiles from hour to hour was wont to contemplate an enchanted world.

THE thing had begun one day early in spring. Mr. Stiles, helping himself to a drink from the water-cooler, had thrown a casual and disinterested eye out of his window. There was a court, and on the other side of the court were other windows. Desks, typewriters, water-coolers, hatracks, faces, coiffures, dresses, ink-stands, filing cabinets—the curiously unfinished and arrested *tableaux* that lie forever behind strange windows—these captured his glance for a moment or two.

And then had appeared the coiffure of his dreams, the foreshortened nose of his desires. Mr. Stiles, at first, saw only a stenographer adjusting a small plant in the window of an office a number of floors down and across the court. But this was because Mr. Stiles had become rather a victim of his environment. Overheads and depreciations were Mr. Stiles' environment, and they had drawn a materialistic film over his eyes.

It was only after he had been staring out of his office window several times a day for several weeks that the facts of the case began gradually to overtake the young man. The facts of the case were that a young woman of surpassing beauty, of marvelous intellect, of astonishing grace, culture and refinement was occupied, incongruously enough, as stenographer in an office five flights down and across the building court.

Mr. Stiles' wooing of the unknown paragon across the court progressed. The unknown Guinevere had raised her eyes one day and smiled. Mr. Stiles wore glasses, very good-looking ones, but the smile was easy to see. In fact, the smile seemed to

illumine, vivify and enchant the entire court that separated his office from the office in which the unknown one worked.

There followed a series of smiles, an exchange of inarticulate confidences whose exact nature it is difficult to convey in print. Mr. Stiles, standing at his window, would nod. The unknown Paragon, pausing for a moment at her window, would return the nod. Then there would be smiles, and Mr. Stiles would shake his head, raise his eyebrows, straighten his good-looking tie and wink at the clock. And the Paragon would go through a similar ritual. Mr. Stiles from behind his glasses was of course only able to distinguish that the Paragon remained attentive. And the Paragon, straining her eyes upward, was able to see only that the well-dressed gentleman on the twenty-first floor was watching her.

But what more does love need than a window? It is through windows that we look, and behind windows that our dreams lie. The young man rode home from his work dreaming of a foreshortened nose and a foreshortened coiffure. At night he took long walks and speculated upon the identity of the unknown, upon the sound of her voice, the extent of her vocabulary and the kind of shoes and stockings that she wore. He had never been able to get a look at her shoes, the laws of vision being immutable even before the power of love.

Toward the end of May, Mr. Stiles decided upon action. Love had made him bold, and desire had sharpened his wits. He devoted himself to a study of the building from the inside, and by means of careful geometrical diagrams he calculated the number of the office which contained all that was beautiful in the world. He might have adopted the more simple method of lowering messages on a weighted string and swinging them across the court, but that is the sort of thing young men do only in their boasts.

Thus, one day early in June, Mr. Stiles, nervous and elate, presented himself at an office on the fifteenth floor of the Railway Exchange Building. A charming young woman received him. Mr. Stiles stammered, hesitated, and then uttered a cabalistic query.

"Don't you know me?" he asked.

"Oh," said the charming one, "you're the man upstairs—with the green tie."

FOR two weeks Mr. Stiles abandoned himself to the enslavement of courtship. There were trips to the theaters, to the parks and restaurants. He grew eloquent and explained, whenever the conversation lagged: "It's funny the way a man falls in love. I fell in love with you the first day I saw you. There was something about you predestined for me."

The charming one giggled, and allowed Mr. Stiles, whom she called Larry by this

time, to hold her hand and to kiss her when there was an opportunity. In the third week Larry threw all hesitancy to the winds. He asked the charming one whom he called Dearest and for whose edification he now drew large hearts on the dust of his office window during the hours of their separation—he asked her to marry him.

"I've known you for months," he said, "so it isn't so sudden. I've loved you through the window for a long time."

The young woman said, "Yes." This was on a Saturday, and on the Monday following, after a week-end of idyllic hours, Larry and the young woman started for the City Hall. There were details to settle before the grand gesture of matrimony could be approached. On the way, Larry, his heart soaring in a mist, whispered to the charming one whom he now called Sweetheart.

"I want you to come up to my office," he said, "and stand with me in the window through which I first saw you. It'll seem funny not to see you there any more." Larry's sweetheart was going to stay at home in their new apartment and keep house.

"If you insist," she demurred for a moment. Larry insisted. Somewhat tenderly, and somewhat sentimentally, he escorted the charming one to his office, escorted her to the magic window and stood beside her, his arm cautiously about her waist in such a manner that none of his colleagues would notice—at least, he believed they wouldn't.

"Five floors down," whispered Larry, "and a little to the left. Do you see it?"

AND as he spoke, he grew suddenly pale, for there in the window, five floors down and to the left, was the foreshortened coiffure of his dreams, the foreshortened nose of his desire. He rubbed his eyes.

"Yes," the charming one at his side was saying, "she's back again. I took her place while she went on a vacation. She told me about you before she left—and about your green ties."

Young Mr. Stiles turned away.

"I'll forget—all about everything you've said—if you want me to." She brushed her hand against his as she spoke.

"No," answered young Mr. Stiles, "after all—after all—" But the subject was too deep and involved for comment.

"Her name is Edith," began the young woman, "and maybe—"

"I would never have loved her as I love you," interrupted young Mr. Stiles manfully, "and besides you don't buy things out of the window. You go into the store."

But it is to be noted, in the interests of windows, that two weeks later, when young Mr. Stiles returned proudly and happily from his honeymoon, he asked the boss if he couldn't have his desk changed—the light bothered him.

SAFELY MARRIED

(Continued from page 51)

Cousin Clara's! She never wore it just for Van. It seemed a shame to waste it. But she put it on now. She would be sitting under the lamp when he came, reading—

A thunder-shower was blowing up; presently the rain was beating against the windows like angry fingers. How she loved her home! It was so comfortable, so—what had Dora said?—so safe. How could she ever have envied Dora, dancing on the edge of catastrophe?

Suddenly she wanted fiercely to hear Van's voice. Of course he would be at his office. Other men might do dreadful things, but not Van. Why, he was *her* husband! She wasn't calling to find out. She just wanted to talk to him. She gave his number. She heard the thin, wavering tune of the ringing bell. She waited. There was no answer.

"Try again," she begged central; "it's so important." And to herself she said: "Oh, God, let him be there. Let him be there; and after this, God, it'll be up to me!" At last she hung up the voiceless receiver.

She sat crumpled in the little chair beside the phone. Why had she never guessed his perfidy before? She had trusted him so, and he had deceived her. The rain outside kept up its jealous tapping. Where was he now, and oh, whom was he with?

SHE seemed to have been sitting there for hours when she heard his key in the lock at last. "Hello, dear," he called. She sprang up wildly. Why, it was only nine o'clock. How foolish she had been! As if he would look at another woman! Why, he had been hurrying home to her! But, "I called you and you weren't there," she reproached.

"Central must have called the wrong number," he answered easily. "This is the kind of a night, I tell you, a fellow scuttles for home."

She paused at the door, struck by the phrase. Why, that was what Dora had said. Ah, but Dora, poor Dora, hadn't meant it in the way Van did. "Have you had dinner?" she wanted to know.

He stood looking at her in the best negligence. "How swell-elegant you look! No—let's have a bite."

"I haven't either." She hurried to the kitchen. She got out the salad with the rich, creamy dressing she loved, and the cake. "I'm going to start dieting Monday," she declared. She had a headache now, from going without food so long. Anyhow, tonight was a sort of celebration; she needed to celebrate after the miserable time she had given

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Do you know when to eat soup?

With the meal: Good hot soup is the best possible "introduction" to a meal. Soup is delicious and nourishing in itself. But just as important, soup arouses appetite, creates desire for other food, aids digestion, promotes health.

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herself. And Van loved her. Hadn't she been silly to suspect him? Then she remembered the negligée. It was a shame to crumple it—just for Van.

"I'm going to slip this off," she called from the bedroom. "Don't gobble everything till I get there." Van's damp coat was flung across a chair. He was so careless; she spent most of her days picking up after him. Something slipped from one of the pockets. It was a box of cigarettes, faintly scented.

It burned her hand, that box. He had bought it for another woman—slipped it into his pocket with some soft hand pressed secretly on his own! He had whispered "pretty things" to some girl. He had glided down moonlit roads with some one while she thought he was working, and the little box had told her at last of his perfidy.

She slumped into a chair and sat there a long time thinking. She wanted to scream her demand for an explanation. She wanted to fling herself sobbing on the bed. The rain had sent him scuttling home, after all—"no night for a joy-ride." What should she do?

"Are you ever coming?" Van was calling. "In a minute." She steadied her voice to naturalness. She must think.

What would he say if she confronted him? Oh, she loved him, loved him! She couldn't bear to lose him. What if she had to go back to an office? Had to snatch for happiness as Dora did, afraid, defiant? Oh, the cruelty of life! How could he treat her so? What had Dora said? "If the wives worked as hard to keep their husbands as we work for our dinners, there wouldn't be any tears." Marjorie slipped the box back into the pocket of his coat.

WHEN she returned to the dining-room, she still wore the best negligée. "Glad you didn't change," said Van appreciatively. "That thing makes you look much thinner." So he did notice, after all! She watched him light a cigar. Oh, she could tear his eyes out! How could he be so two-faced? "Have some salad?" he asked.

Salad, and her heart was breaking! "No," said Marjorie. "I—I'm dieting." Oh, this working to keep a husband was hard, hard. But she would go hungry to win him back from this other woman. She would become wan and lovely, and he would be very sorry. "No," said Marjorie again, "nor any cake." It was good of her not to reproach him.

She would get very thin and interesting. "Why," she asked with a catch in her breath, "why is concrete better than steel for towers?"

He looked at her, dumfounded. "Why—why, what's come over you? Gee! You look pale. Not feeling low, are you?"

"Must I be sick to ask an intelligent question?" She couldn't quite keep the bitterness out of her voice.

"No, sure not, hon. But you don't have to fill your pretty head with such things. What'd you do today? Have a good time with your fair financier?"

"Yes, Dora was here," Marjorie told him icily. She meant to convey by the name of Dora all the indiscretions that lady stood for.

"Oh," said Van, "—makes me think. There's some cigarettes in my coat for your lady friends. Don't want 'em to think your husband isn't a good provider."

Marjorie looked at him a little dizzily for a moment. Then she sat up. To have doubted Van! Ever to have doubted him! Oh, it was wonderful to be safely married!

"I've changed my mind," said Marjorie. "Pass the cake and—I guess I will have some salad, after all."

SCRUB MATERIAL

(Continued from page 47)

with nothing for all my hard work but the scrub tag."

He got up and began to pace up and down the floor, puffing vigorously upon his cigar.

"YOU see, that fall I had really got so I could tackle anything. I'd worked on it all summer against a Wesleyan back who was summering near me. Got so he couldn't dodge me. And he was a pretty elusive chap, too, I tell you. Let's see—what was his name? He was a kicker, a great punter."

"Gordon, wasn't it?" suggested Hoag.

"Gordon. That's the chap. Well, practice started, and up at Yale a left-footed kicker came into prominence. You and Coach Bronson, Gumbo, wanted the team to practice breaking through on a left-footed punter and drop-kicker, you remember?"

"Yes, I remember," Hoag nodded.

"You ought to." Dodge paused opposite where Hoag was sitting, his face grim. "I could kick left-footed, and I was elected. That meant the finish of my hopes for end. But somebody had to kick left-footed, and I was the only one for the job."

"You went in without a murmur," said Hoag. "I remember the punishment you took, too. We were all out to get that left-footed Eli kicker, and you had to take what was eventually coming to him."

"I took it." Dodge resumed his pacing of the floor. "Day after day, I got it good. And the season went on. Then we came up to the Yale game. Harrison, the regular right-end, was hurt and out. It came to be a choice between Barber, who had played regular end two years and that particular year had returned to college late in October, and me. Everyone was betting on Barber. But you picked me. Without doubt, I think, it was the biggest thing anyone ever did for me. . . . Well, I've always hoped I justified you. We won the game, anyway."

"Yes, we won and I was justified." Hoag got up from his chair as Mrs. Dodge rose. Her face was flushed, her eyes bright.

"I am indebted to you, Mr. Hoag," she said. "Daniel has quite been taken out of himself. It's—it's rather an experience." She smiled at her husband. "Certainly when we have gone to football games, he hasn't been nearly so enthusiastic as he has been tonight. Isn't it so, Daniel? You have sat hunched up, growling mainly about stupid playing and the vile forward pass and I don't know what."

Dodge glanced at her, but deeply involved in retrospect, he continued to pace up and down the room, his brows knitted thoughtfully.

"Jove, I don't know whether I'd have dared take the chance you took or not, Hoag, had the case been reversed. I'm frank to say I don't think I should have."

"Oh, well—" Hoag shrugged, not knowing what else to say.

"You're staying the night, aren't you, Mr. Hoag?" Mrs. Dodge had moved toward the door.

"Of course I'm staying the night." Dodge confronted his guest. "Didn't the man I sent to your hotel bring all your luggage?"

"No, I told him merely my dinner-clothes. I—I—" Hoag hesitated. "Under the circumstances, I mean the business circumstances, I hadn't felt—"

"Stuff! What about the business circumstances? What's business got to do with this? You were my college roommate and my varsity captain, weren't you?"

"Why—yes. But, Dan, you have a decision to make as to the chairman of the board in this amalgamation, and—well, frankly, I'm a candidate, of course."

"Of course. All right, suppose you are?" Dodge threw his head back in silent laughter. "Gumbo, you made me sweat good before you put me on the varsity. You'll have to do the sweating now while I take time to mature this matter, to find out whether you're the man for this varsity berth."

"Yes, yes. That's quite all right," Hoag hastened to say. "I was merely wondering whether or not it was fair to my colleagues to—occupy quite the position with you of being your house guest—"

"You mean"—Dodge darted a shrewd glance at the man—"that the very fact of our friendship might prejudice me against you? H'm, that's a new thought. Well, unless you were outstanding as a candidate, —I mean all things being pretty equal among you,—I'll confess it might work against you."

Hoag started, then stared at the man.

"Dan, I believe you. But honestly, my idea was not so selfish as that."

"I understand precisely. . . . Look here, Hoag. Do you recall soon after I found you among the group this afternoon I called in one of my staff and walked off to a corner of the room with him? Well," he went on as Hoag nodded, "I told him to go

out to a certain important man upon whom I've been relying pretty heavily for information in this amalgamation matter, and get a rigid line on you. He gave it to me, type-written, just as I was leaving the office. I read it upstairs in my room before dinner. It's flattering, Hoag, downright flattering."

"You don't say!" Hoag was flushing vividly. "I'm—I'm glad."

"Oh, well—we'll see." Dodge waved the matter aside with his cigar. "At least, Gumbo, if you wont stay the night, you can come up to my study while I dig out some of the old photographs and clippings."

But the first photograph Hoag saw occupied a prominent place on the long table-desk in the center of the room. It was of a tall, slim young fellow in football garb, and when he first saw it, he took it to be an early portrait of Dodge. But it wasn't.

As Hoag advanced to it, his host gestured. "That's my boy," he said simply.

"Well!" Hoag straightened up, glancing quickly at the man. "I was thinking at dinner. I seemed to remember you had a son."

"He's at college now, a junior." Dodge's voice was gruff. "They've been trying to make a varsity football-player out of him for the past two years." He paused, then brought his hands together. "He'll make one, too—if he's got the stuff. The blood is in him. It's up to him. Maybe a little too much of his mother. I don't know."

"He's a scrub, then," Hoag was regarding the man gravely.

"A scrub—yes. But we'll talk about him later. In fact, I want you to look him over and see"—here Dodge's voice took on a note of exasperation—"what the devil is the matter."

DODGE'S son was not mentioned again. Talk ranged pleasantly over football days of the past, over heroes whose names survive only in the memory of the older generation of college men and in the record-books. And later, when Hoag stepped out of Dodge's motorcar at his hotel and went to his room, he had nothing so concrete among his impressions of the evening as the fact that Dodge had the liveliest sense of gratitude for his elevation from the scrub eleven to the varsity; that, indeed, it had run through his life like a thread of gold, clean in every phase and detail as some momentous event of youth will be, whereas many subsequent events of vastly greater im-

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portance had either been forgotten or had faded into insignificance.

All this the great banker had made no effort to conceal. Some wellspring of sentiment had been touched way back in that day of youth, and he had seemed, as Hoag thought, to derive the sheerest satisfaction in every recollection of the incident and entailed events.

And in the course of the evening he had developed the absolute conviction that Dodge would like nothing so much as to be able to requite the act of his old football leader in some such signal manner as naming him for the post of supreme authority in the new amalgamation. While this conviction was very definite, there was, too, an impression of something unsettled in the banker's mind concerning him, as though out of the keen if unobtrusive scrutiny to which Hoag had been subjected throughout the evening, had developed a certain element of doubt. As to its nature he knew not; nor could he determine whether it was of major or minor character. He was certain, however, that it existed.

In any event, a very important conference of the mill-owners would intervene. It had been arranged for ten o'clock, Dodge not to be present, and Hoag was looking forward to it with mingled eagerness and dread; for at this meeting it was certain the fitness of all candidates for the office of chairman would be pretty thoroughly canvassed, indirectly if not directly. While whatever occurred might not be used to sway Dodge in his selection, it probably would be, and at any rate, it was important as determining in great or small measure, the efficiency and enthusiasm of coöperation among the group.

Hoag hoped only that his belief in his qualifications for the post would bulwark him upon the morrow, and that a night of sound sleep would find him in mood and condition to be at his best when the meeting assembled.

BUT as it turned out, Hoag was not at all at his best, just as at the bottom of his mind had lurked throughout the knowledge he would not be. He tried to attribute it to a sort of sporting feeling of self-consciousness at the advantage he held over his fellows in his friendship for Dodge. But he knew it was not that. As a matter of fact he knew just what it was, deny it as he would, fight it as he did.

For example, Randolph brought up the point of gingham, complaining that his plant was overloaded for production of the fabric, whereas the market now was all for printed crêpe.

"Well, then,"—and even Hoag's slow drawl was not so deliberate as to permit him to catch himself before the words were all out,—"we'll have to shut down that part of your plant and—" He was just raising his hand as though to obliterate the sentence and was about to proceed with a new thought, when Gormeley took what he was about to say completely away from him.

"COMMON GROUND"

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The author? Who else but—

GERALD BEAUMONT

"Shut down, hell! We aren't necessarily confined to cotton. We'll shoot the Passaic-Essex Mills into wool. What?"

Amid a chorus of applause, Hoag's assertion that a similar thought had occurred to him while he was speaking, was lost. It was one of several incidents not quite so pronounced as this that had already occurred. And the fact that later Hoag lost himself in the heat of discussion and very simply, clearly and masterfully took up the subject of finance, which had become involved, and straightened it out, failed to reestablish himself in his own esteem. Even when he demonstrated to Gormeley himself that much money could be saved in using hydro-electric power at the Pawsocket Mills instead of coal, he still felt himself under the spell of the early disadvantage, and in rather a somber mood he left the meeting when it adjourned.

"Have a good meeting?" asked Dodge, looking up from his desk, where a light luncheon for two had been placed as Hoag entered the room.

"Rotten." Hoag, at a gesture from the banker, sat down and picked up a sandwich. Then, not sparing himself, he narrated all that had taken place with a particularity as to varying topic and detail that a stenographic report could hardly have improved upon.

Dodge, eating the while, eying the man keenly throughout, nodded from time to time, and at length when Hoag had finished, he rose without comment.

"Well, come on," he said, "and we'll go down and have a look at that boy of mine."

THE ride came to be a silent one, but finally when the great motor topped a rise of ground and the distant Gothic towers of their university came into view, Dodge placed a hand gently upon his companion's knee.

"The towers of Camelot, Gumbo." His voice was low, solemn.

"Yes." Hoag nodded. "Beautiful. . . . We were boys there, Dan."

"Boys, yes." A frown gathered upon Dodge's face. "Gumbo, there has seemed nothing I wanted so in life as to see Dan Junior playing on the varsity as I did, crashing through, winning his game." He swept his hands in a wide gesture. "Today you'll see him on the scrub."

"Well," smiled Hoag, "I saw you there, too."

"Yes," came the swift retort, "and you saw me on the varsity. Look closely at the boy today and tell me if we'll ever see him there. I'm beginning to doubt it."

They found the younger Dodge in his room. In build he was almost identical with his father, and he resembled him closely—except that his lips were not so thin and his eyes deeper, not so hard, not so cold. The eyes and mouth, Hoag decided, came from the mother.

Hoag took to the boy instinctively, and the boy took to him. He had a beautiful smile, and undoubtedly the university had marked him with a demeanor rather scholarly than athletic.

"Well, Dan, been playing any on the varsity this week? When I talked to the coach a fortnight ago, he gave me the impression you were working up." Dodge leaned forward in his chair, taking a cigar from his pocket.

Hoag caught a fleeting expression upon the son's face as though almost flinching at the question.

"Why—" He picked up a book and toyed with it for a moment. "Why, no, Father; I'm still on the scrub."

"I see." Dodge struck a match savagely and lighted his cigar. "No improvement, eh?"

"Well, yes. That is, I think I'm interfering a lot better. In fact,"—he smiled

embarrassedly,—"I got to taking out tacklers so well that they put me in at No. 1 back on the varsity the other day."

"Eh! They did! The varsity, eh!" Dodge leaned forward. "How did you do? You're not there now."

"Not so well—" The boy hesitated. "I was much too tall and—awkward for the backfield. I've got to stand or fall at end."

"Well, end, then—I suppose it's the old trouble, tackling down-field. I had it. You've got to overcome it, that's all. Work, work, work, my boy! Hard work, grueling work, constant work."

"I am tackling better. I know that. But I'm always having trouble with the opposing tackle and the backs when they come at me."

"That's it, eh. Well, that's nothing but lack of competitive spirit, Dan. Nothing else."

"Yes sir." There was a curious lack of spirit in the reply, and the manner of it touched Hoag's heart. Indeed, as the incisive, merciless cross-examination went on, and the boy, as though fully sensible of his father's ambition for him, made his answers with rare patience, courtesy and consideration, Hoag felt, in ever-increasing degree, the impulse to intervene and if possible end the inquisition. But he restrained himself.

LATER, upon the fading turf of the gridiron when the preliminary passing, punting and work of individual instruction among groups of varsity specialists in the various departments of the game had ceased, and the scrub eleven was called out for scrimmage against the regular team, Hoag had the answer concerning the younger Dodge.

And it confirmed an impression the man had caught when, a few moments later, he was able to get off alone with young Dodge for a brief conversation. The boy did not like football. Here, unquestionably, was the solution of the whole trouble.

It was not that he played badly. Hoag, watching him like a lynx, could detect no grievous flaws in his game—except that it lacked in almost every respect that spark, that flavor, that inimitable sanction that defines a man so unmistakably as the varsity so. All these things might conceivably develop—they might. But obviously they were lacking now.

Yet again Hoag, who had not kept in touch with football, was amazed at the increased demands upon an end which the years had brought. There was the rigid sharpening of the opposition between him and the opposing tackle and backs, the constant charging in, even upon defense, the manifold requirements of the offensive and defensive forward-pass game, the down-field work. Truly, Hoag decided, the modern end had need of superhuman vitality, brains, courage, alertness and intuition.

As for young Dodge—Hoag's eyes softened as he watched a powerful gorilla-like varsity tackle crush the striding down while the interference and the man with the ball trampled over the prostrate body and went on.

"Damn!" Dodge's lips were tightly compressed. "Did you see that, Hoag?"

"Yes, I saw it." The other man nodded, and a bit later turned to the banker with a smile when his son went down the field on a punt and nailed the receiver in his tracks.

"Yes, yes. But—" Dodge shook his head slowly. His eyes were gleaming, and he was scowling.

"He's taking his pounding right well." Hoag's voice was soft. "They all are, those scrub boys. That's all they get day after day—just hard knocks. What do they get out of it? Nothing, except their bruises. An idea of loyalty, what? Dan, it takes boys, nineteen, twenty, twenty-one, to do that, and I'm wondering right now, if



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the things these scrub boys are getting aren't bigger, more valuable than anything they'd get on the varsity."

"Oh, stuff!" Dodge placed his hand upon his companion's shoulder, the fingers pressing in fiercely. "The thing that counts is success in whatever you're going after. You know that, and I know it."

"Depends upon what you call success."

"Hoag—" Dodge gestured and shrugged. "Well, I'm not going to enter into any abstract argument with you. The thing that galls me, and the thing no one can get around, is that here I am on the side-lines watching my son, the son of an old varsity player, getting smashed down into the turf, shunted here and there—cannon-fodder. Scrub! And he'll never be anything else. Can't you see it? I can."

"I can see a lot, Dan." Hoag faced the man squarely. "I wish I had a boy out there on the scrub. My children are all daughters, you know."

But Dodge, crouched upon one knee, had returned attention to the practice, eyeing the scrimmage doggedly, as though determined to extract therefrom something that would lighten the emotions that filled him concerning his son.

But he found nothing, and at length when the deep October shadows had settled upon the field and the coach's whistle blew, ending practice for the day, Dodge turned to his companion, his face grimly set.

"Let's go over and catch Dan," he said.

THEY didn't have to hurry. Young Dodge had delayed at the bench, adjusting his blanket about his shoulders as though overborne with weariness. It had been a grueling Thursday practice, and the boy's face was drawn, streaked with dirt, an abrasion under one eye. He limped a bit as he came toward the two older men.

"Well—" He quickly turned his gaze from his father, glancing at Hoag, smiling wanly.

"Dan,"—his father made a little gesture,— "I'm glad I came down today." As the boy turned to him with a sudden movement of pleased eagerness, Dodge shook his head. "No, not that. I'm glad I came down, because it settles my mind about you. Dan boy, you haven't come through in this business, and you're—let me finish, please—you're not going to. You've failed, and—" "Father—"

The boy had been through a veritable hell that afternoon. He had given everything there was in him to give. Play after play, he had withstood that sickening impact of bone against bone, flesh against flesh, which never the spectator, only the observer standing upon the field close to the play, may know and understand. The weight of a scientifically poised, scientifically polished major-grade football eleven had been launched at him pitilessly, repeatedly. And he had given his very vitals to withstand them. He was sick, way deep inside he was sick, so that now as he tried to speak, his eyes seemed to turn white, and a sob broke his voice.

"Father, I—"

"Wait a minute, just one minute, please, sir! —Boy—" With a quick step Hoag

went to the boy, placing a big arm around his shoulder, facing the man who held his destiny in his hands. For a moment there was silence. The field, save for a group halfway to the dressing-rooms, was deserted, and a chill wind that had sprung up with the sunset was swirling through the bare concrete walls of the stadium.

"Daniel Dodge," he said, "I've been wanting to say something all day. I've been wanting to say something ever since you and I began to talk football yesterday. Dan, you've got nothing to say to this boy of yours about football. He's a better player as he stands, scrub though he may be, than you ever were."

"Eh?" Dodge stared at the man, not angrily. Surprise was in his face; yet also there was cool speculation. "You say—"

"I say, if this boy here had been playing football in our day, he would be varsity end, hands down. That's what I say. It's a new game, Dan, a different game, and you're asking this boy to go out and do big things. Why? On what basis? Because he has your varsity football blood."

Hoag took his arm from the player's shoulder and confronted the father.

"Do you reckon you could make that varsity team we saw today if you were your son's age and out there trying? Well, you couldn't. Football blood! You never had enough real football blood to transmit."

Dodge smiled coolly.

"That's a strange statement from one old varsity man to another, Gumbo."

"Strange it may be, but it's the truth. Let me tell you something: you never had any right to be a varsity man. And I never had any right to put you on. I'll admit you played better than you knew how in the one game, but even so, Bim Ellis, your tackle, was a big help, Dodge. At the finish you picked up a loose ball and won the game. But that was accident, Dan. You know it as well as I do. You never were a varsity man, from start to finish. So lay off that boy of yours. He's trying under conditions you never faced, and right now he's a better football player than you ever were."

DODGE glanced at his son, who stood staring dazedly from one man to the other.

"Very well, Hoag; I'll accept your opinion on football any day. Only,"—his voice was as lancinating and keen now as the blade of a rapier,— "may I ask why, then, did you use your influence in my behalf?"

"Why?" Hoag threw up his head with a laugh. "Because that was my weakness. I was your friend and that swayed me; but more than that, you were the stronger character and you dominated me. You thought it was your own merits as a player and my friendship that saw you through. Well, your merits had nothing to do with it. You didn't have enough of them. Friendship played some part—at least, I always fooled myself in that way."

"You interest me, Gumbo."

"It's the truth. It was my weakness that put you on the team. My weakness! And that was the turning-point for me. That one act affected me through life, made me doubt myself when opposed to men, Dan. It made me doubtful in that conference this morning, when I knew I had the goods to show. You caught that. I could see your look when I told you about it later. I've seen your look of doubt throughout. I could see you had nosed out the weak angle, yet not knowing exactly what it was."

Hoag paused, but Dodge, whose glance, cool and appraising, had not wavered from the man, said nothing, made no move.

"I'll tell you what it was, Dan. I'm the scrub man in this amalgamation. That's where I'll be put. That's where I ought to be put, and that's where I had rather be put than to accept something from you in return for a favor I should never have done you."

Now! Thank God I've said it! I've been wanting to say it for thirty years. . . . Well, Dan,"—Hoag stepped toward the other man with a smile, his hand outstretched,— "will you shake hands now after all this, or will—"

"Just a moment, Gumbo," Dodge turned to his son. "Dan, do you want to quit playing football? If so you have my—"

"Father!" The boy came to the man, eyeing him bravely. For a moment the two stood thus; then the hand of the older man went out, resting upon the other's shoulder. "Father, no, I don't want to quit football." His voice quivered. "I don't like the game, no; I hate it. But I need it. And all the time I'm hating it less. I'm going to carry on. And, Father,"—the boy stood erect, reaching up one hand and covering the hand upon his shoulder,— "I'll be a varsity man yet."

"You will." Dodge, smiling, turned to Hoag, who was nodding slowly. "And if not, it will be all right anyway. Quite all right, Dan. Never forget that; it will be all right, whatever happens. Now, Gumbo Hoag—" He left his son and approached the mill-owner. "You've just got something out of your system that has been lying there a long, long while. I saw it all the time we've been together, wondering, not quite placing it. Yes, I did, too. I knew what your trouble was. Gumbo, I've always had a habit of looking facts in the face. I knew in my heart how I came to be a varsity man. Well, you've cleared your soul at last. How do you feel now?"

HOAG straightened, his eyes glowing with a new fire, his voice resonant.

"Just . . . arin' to go, Dan, arin' to go."

"So!" Dodge fixed the man with a long, penetrating gaze. Then he nodded as though in decision. "Gumbo, you've taken something out of my life. Nothing more than I knew in my heart all the time, as I've told you. But there are times, you know, when one can cherish an illusion. No more, though; you've finished that."

There was a pause. Dodge studying the other man's face with a sort of strained eagerness.

"But wait a minute: I did win that Yale game, didn't I?"

"You did, Dan, sure enough."

"And I played—what was it you said?—better than I knew how, that day. In other words, I played pretty decent football, what?"

"Yes, you certainly did."

Dodge swung around upon his boy, smiling radiantly. "You hear that, son?"

"But, Dan,"—Hoag raised his hand,— "that fact isn't excusing me from putting you on the varsity under the circumstances."

"No, I know," Dodge was still smiling.

"I catch your point perfectly. Well, you've fixed that matter up. You've been quite frank, Hoag."

"Well, sir," returned Hoag, laughing harshly, "you will have the satisfaction of putting me on the scrub."

But Dodge was slowly shaking his head, frowning.

"That," he said, "is precisely the trouble. I can't—now. Let me whisper something that may sound queer, Gumbo. Much as I appreciated that friendly act you did for me when we were boys, that was the one thing that would have forced me to put you on the scrub. I'd have had to, because business comes before friendship always. But now—you've wiped that matter out clean. I could cheerfully kill you for doing it—but I can never permit personal motives to affect my business judgment."

Hoag stepped toward the man, staring.

"What do you mean—by that?"

"Nothing, Gumbo—except we're going to pin the varsity letter on you now. And tomorrow you can go to your team and teach 'em the signals."

McFee Again

"You can't have too many stories by William McFee," writes an enthusiast. Very well, there'll be another in an early issue, called—

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THE KILLER

(Continued from page 71)

For the first time in many a year the grizzled battler felt himself overmatched. Seeking safety in flight, he tacked and veered at full speed across the snow. Yet run as he would, the pattering bounds of his pursuer almost immediately cut down the distance which separated them. Again and again that Sleeper, who should have been safe in his hollow tree, had to turn and make a running fight for his life, but always at a terrible disadvantage. The black weasel was swifter; his claws and teeth were longer; and above all, his unearthly strength seemed to leave the raccoon no chance in a stand-up fight. Then, as the two zigzagged across the snow, they passed under a huge white oak which grew by itself at the edge of the upper slope of the mountain. Instantly the raccoon rushed up the tree like a squirrel, probably reasoning that, as he was fighting a losing battle on the ground, he might do better aloft.

For a moment the fisher stood motionless. Only when the raccoon was irretrievably committed to the treetop, did he follow, gliding up the trunk and flowing smoothly along the branches like a swift, black flame. The chase was a short one. The raccoon was rapid and certain in all his movements, but on his trail that morning was the fastest climber of North America. A squirrel can move through the treetops faster than a man can run on the ground; a pine-marten makes his living catching squirrels; yet a blackcat can run down a marten in midair as easily as a cat pounces on a mouse.

Before the grizzled body of the raccoon had even reached the crest of the oak, the dark, sinuous shape of the killer was upon him. Clinging to a limb with his hindpaws, the blackcat clamped both sets of his foreclaws into the sloping shoulders of the raccoon and with irresistible strength drew the struggling animal toward his grinning jaws. Vainly it struggled to break the killer's grip, and bit and tore as the steel-strong arms dragged him inexorably forward, until with a little hiss of terrible contentment, the jaws of the great weasel closed upon his victim's throat like a death-trap. A few minutes later, and the body of the raccoon was cached beneath the same boughs which hid the carcass of the porcupine.

A WEEK after the passing of the raccoon, there dawned a day gray as a ghost. Now and then a flurry of snow wreathed the towering peaks. The withered leaves of the oaks were burnt sienna, overlaid with blotches of crimson and the underbrush an umber-brown against the snow, with here and there gleams of carmine where the shoots of the red-osier dogwood showed, while the pure pale yellow of the poverty-grass waved in the wind like a woman's hair.

Just above the pine tops, a great hawk quartered to and fro, its blue-gray body the color of the winter sky. Its black cap and the gray barring on its breast were the field-marks of a goshawk of the North, driven down by the cold and famine of the bitter winter.

Suddenly the fierce golden eyes of the bird gleamed like fire, and swift as the scud of a cloud, it swooped toward where a black shape showed against the snow in an open space near the base of one of the lower peaks. As the great hawk approached the motionless form, it hovered uncertainly for an instant in midair, while the beast below struggled to raise himself up from the snow, only to fall back feebly with relaxed head and half-shut eyes.

Fretted by a fierce hunger, the goshawk suddenly raised its rounded wings and shot down like a flash of gray, its keen talons stretched straight out as it dropped. Then, just as the crooked claws were about to

clamp themselves deep into the black fur beneath, a strange thing happened.

Like the snap of a released spring, the great weasel shot six feet from the ground, gripped the goshawk in midair and drove its daggerlike teeth through the great bird's neck. The sky-king had been caught in that trap of death which the crafty weasel had baited with his own black body, and the proud wings of the dead bird trailed in the snow as the blackcat carried it off to one of his numerous hunting-dens.

The tough, stringy flesh of the hawk was all the food the blackcat had for many days, so bad was the hunting on Seven Mountains during that iron month. Then dawned one of those crystal days which come in every winter. The spruces were inked black against a turquoise sky, while from the rose-gray branches of the beeches sounded the medley music of a flock of crossbills all cinnamon-red, burnt orange and tawny gold against the snow. In the distance the seven peaks of the mountain towered a deep violet against the black-green of the massed hemlocks.

DOWN from his den in the blasted pine the black weasel moved like a shadow, his eyes glittering with the fierce hunger which had driven him forth to hunt by day. Just as he reached the ground, a magnificent red fox loped by with the swift, easy gait of his kind. In the winter sunshine he was a mass of blended tawny pinks, russets and yellow-browns, set off by the old-gold, dull silver and shining ebony of his slim, trim legs. As he passed, the blackcat darted toward him with a hungry grating snarl. Cocking his head wisely to one side, the fox seemed to regard his pursuer with an air of amused tolerance, and as the bounding black figure came near, he quickened his effortless gait and in a flash had disappeared over the edge of a near-by ridge.

Then began a strange chase—the race of the hare and the tortoise over again. Against the dazzling speed, the craft and the wiles of the fox, the black weasel opposed an iron endurance, and the unfaltering tenacity of his breed.

At first the fox seemed resolved to make a straight-away run for it. Across the wooded slope, up one of the peaks and down on the other side, he raced with a speed which set miles of mountain and forest between himself and his follower. Not until he reached the bounds of his farthest hunting range did he circle back rather than dare an unknown territory with such a pursuer on his trail.

The pekan evidently was acquainted with this peculiarity of the fox family, for when the tracks began to veer in a long curve to the left, he abandoned the trail altogether, and running in a straight line toward the base of the mountain, picked it up again in a few miles after covering only about a third of the distance which the fox had run. Several times more during the day the fisher saved himself weary miles of hard going by similar cut-offs—the same method by which the red speed-king himself had run down many a Northern hare.

At last, late in the day, the fox, discovering that he could not throw off his pursuer by sheer speed, began to resort to all the shifts and stratagems of his clan. At first he doubled back and forth on his tracks, and bounding to one side or the other, tried to throw his dark pursuer off the track. Such tactics, however, were wasted on the blackcat, whose unerring nose solved every twist and turn and double of the hunted animal.

Then, as the sun went westering down the sky, the trail of the hunted fox skirted the edge of a sheer cliff. Passing beneath the branches of a squat white-oak, whose limbs

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overhung the precipice, it led back into the dense forest for a quarter of a mile or so—and ended. Immediately the black weasel, running with a swift, deadly intentness, began to make ever-widening casts on either side of the fox's tracks, all the speed and savagery of his tense body and the cunning of his fierce brain focused on the trail which hitherto he had followed with the certainty of death itself.

FOR a time it appeared as if the craft of the old dog-fox had saved him. Circle and hunt as he would, the great weasel could find no trace of any track leading away from the paw-prints of the fox in the snow, although he back-tracked them for nearly a mile. At the right lay the precipice, which fell sheer to the rocky slope below and it would seem as if the hunted animal could only have escaped toward the forest side of the trail.

More and more swiftly the blackcat raced to and fro, and made wide interlaced arcs in the snow along the path of the fox as a chord, while his deep-set eyes flamed with rage at the baffling delay. Still there was no sign of any track on either side of the long trail. At last the dark weasel stopped under the low-hanging boughs of the oak, and his wide head turned slowly from side to side as he scanned the snow for any sign of the fox.

Suddenly he saw where a mass of snow had fallen from the oak some ten feet away toward the cliff side. With a quick spring, he caught the end of a great branch which nearly touched the ground, and slipped along it like a great black squirrel. A moment later and he had solved the mystery of the lost trail. In a wide crotch of the drooping limb showed the prints of the fox's feet which had dislodged the snow that had betrayed him. The fugitive had run for a long distance past the oak, and then, doubling back, had leaped with one bound into the crotch from which the snow had fallen. Following his tracks along the limb, the blackcat came to a place where another huge branch hung over the cliff. Beyond the end of that limb the prints of the fox's paws showed again where he had jumped to a little ledge of rock some ten feet below, from which he had followed a concealed path which zigzagged down the face of the cliff to the ground below.

Perhaps some hunted animal which the fox had pursued had shown him that desperate way of escape. Only as a last resort had he finally hazarded his own life on such a leap and such a path, where the tiniest slip on his part, or a slide of the banked snow underfoot, would hurl him to the rocks.

The great weasel took one look at the way along which the fugitive had gone, and another down the depths which lay before him. At the bottom of a dizzy precipice a great spruce showed its spiring top and tough drooping branches loaded down with snow. Without an instant's hesitation the black killer sprang into the air, stretching out its wide paws and arching its squat body as it whizzed downward toward the tree far below. In a second it had crashed like a dislodged boulder straight through layer after layer of yielding boughs and elastic twigs, to land finally in a deep drift beneath the tree.

There are few animals who would have dared such a leap, and fewer still who could have endured the shock of such a landing. A blackcat, however, is built of reinforced steel and leather, and a moment later that one was pursuing the recovered trail with the same fierce intensity which it had shown from the beginning, having cut off by the desperate jump several minutes from the fox's long lead.

Running faster and faster as the hours went by, the great weasel raced the sun

out of the sky and ran down the stars during the night that followed, and the dawn of the second day found hunter and hunted moving slowly around the mountain like a red and black tandem, so close were they to each other. The silver-tipped brush of the fox, which had waved above him like the white plume of Navarre, trailed through the snow, and he lurched and staggered as he ran; yet try as he would, the blackcat could not close up the gap.

Then, as the sun showed clear of the central peak, the fox suddenly stopped and with both fore-paws squeezed out the snow-water which his bushy tail soaked up like a sponge. Just as the great weasel reached him, he sprang away again, refreshed by his moment of rest, and freed from the weight which had held him back, instantly opened up a wide gap between himself and his black pursuer. As he neared the top of a long hill, the reason for his sudden spurt appeared, as he shot into the entrance of a cunningly concealed burrow toward which he had been heading all the night through. At the sight the lips of the fisher curled back from his fierce teeth in a soundless snarl of anticipation, for an animal who goes to earth with a weasel on his trail, usually goes to his death. The red fox, however, had still left one last resource of the underground people, as he went down the burrow with a full minute's start over the black killer behind him.

The main tunnel of his den branched a few feet from the entrance into shafts which led to the bedroom, storeroom and kitchen-midden respectively, where all the refuse of the establishment was tidily buried. Close to the entrance, however, and half-hidden by an elbow in the tunnel, was a fourth passage which led to the secret exit which every well-regulated fox-house has. Flashing into that side-shaft, the fox dug desperately and before his moment of grace was half over, had masked the entrance to the hidden tunnel with a layer of earth fully six inches thick.

WITH a pattering rush, the great weasel entered the burrow just as the fox slipped out like a tawny shadow into the middle of a thicket fifty yards away, where the secret shaft opened. Like black fire, the furious pekan flowed through every tunnel, but passed unheeding the masked entrance to the secret outlet. Then, as he was about to rush out and circle its entrance on the chance of again picking up the lost trail, he came upon a couple of plump partridges cached in the storeroom. At the sight the fisher forgot everything save the raging hunger which gnawed at his entrails like a rat, and a few minutes later, full-fed, he curled himself up in a round, warm ball and slept until dark. Before he awoke, a snowstorm, that friend of the hunted, had set in and blotted out beyond all finding, every track and trail made during the day.

Meantime, far away across the mountain, in one of his hunting-dens, the red fox slept too, his warm brush wrapped like a quilt around his soft nose and the bare pads of his paws. He was tired and hungry and homeless, yet fortunate beyond most animals, since he was one of the favored few who had escaped with their lives when once the Black Death of Seven Mountains had been upon their trail.

Samuel Scoville, Jr.

Has written another animal story for an early issue of this magazine—the story of the most dramatic day in the life of one of the strangest animals in the world, and one of the strangest dogs in the world.

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A Christmas gift for pipe-smoking bank presidents —and others

What better example of the true Christmas spirit than this letter of Mr. Johnson, a Nebraska bank president:

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Gentlemen:

One of my customers presented me, at Christmas time, with a half-pound tin of Edgeworth, out of appreciation for services rendered probating his father's estate.

In thanking him for the gift I told him that it appealed to me for two reasons—the spirit in which it was given, and the fact that he remembered the kind of smoking tobacco I have used for the past ten years. He made use of an expression which will interest you and which appealed to me.

The expression used was, "Us fellows who smoke Edgeworth never forget one another."

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Send us \$1.65 for each 16-ounce jar, and 75c for each 8-ounce tin to be shipped, also a list of the names and addresses of those you wish to remember, with your personal greeting card for each friend.

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Personal: If you are not personally acquainted with Edgeworth, send your name and address to Larus & Brother Company, 8 L South 21st Street, Richmond, Va. We will send you free samples—generous helpings both of Edgeworth Plug Slice and Edgeworth Ready-Rubbed.

Edgeworth is sold in various sizes. Both Edgeworth Plug Slice and Edgeworth Ready-Rubbed are packed in small, pocket-size packages, in handsome humidors, holding a pound, and also in several handy in-between sizes.

To Retail Tobacco Merchants: If your jobber cannot supply you with Edgeworth, Larus & Brother Company will gladly send you prepaid by parcel post a one- or two-dozen carton of any size of Edgeworth Plug Slice or Edgeworth Ready-Rubbed for the same price you would pay the jobber.

SEALED PAPERS

(Continued from page 37)

Certain that Mrs. Mandriga would wish to see him that night, he decided to remain at liberty. Leaving instructions with his valet to announce that he was out to all callers, he sank down in an easy-chair before the fireplace, lighted a pipe and puffing out vigorous volumes of smoke, began communing with himself by exclaiming:

"What the devil does it all mean!"

But the more he studied the case and reflected, the more his mystification increased. Why draw a will so clumsily if the intention were to disinherit the wife—a will which would not stand for a second in any court of the land? Why this sop of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, when her dower rights alone must be worth millions? The lurking threat in the sealed letter? What inexplicable disclosure could it contain?

"I can drive a team of horses through that will," he assured himself. "That's just what puzzles me. Mandriga was no fool, nor Schnell either. They knew the weakness of that will; hence, the letter—the sword suspended over her head—the attempt to frighten her into submission. And by Jove, it has got her already!"

All at once he sat up nervously. Supposing Schnell had tricked her into a promise? What a mistake he had made to leave her there, even at her own demand, without warning her as to her rights! In his agitation he sprang up and was halfway to the telephone before he checked himself and returned to his seat.

"No. Other women perhaps. Not this one. Lose her pretty little head? Hold up, Larry, my boy, hold up! Don't go off half-cocked! She'll never act on impulse—not that little lady!"

AS he was still groping among his conjectures, Van Royden, who shared the apartment with him, came in. He was a man of forty-two or forty-three, who having too much income to work and too little income to marry, had adopted the profession of a bachelor.

"The man I want," said Delameter, raising his head. "Charley, I'm stumped. If there is anyone in the world who can give me the information, you can!"

"A woman?"

"Mrs. Louis Mandriga."

"What about her?"

"Is she straight?"

"My dear boy," responded Van Royden instantly, "you know that in all matters dealing with the charming sex I am invincibly and profoundly skeptical. Every woman is under suspicion until she has been proven innocent. And then? And yet I am going to surprise you at the risk of losing my reputation. I will wager my right hand on Mrs. Mandriga's virtue."

"Still—who knows?"

"My boy, there are some things you do know. You know them by instinct! I am not going on what the public knows, though there, as you know, there has never been the slightest gossip—not the slightest! I am going purely on my own instincts—"

"As a man who knows women," interjected Delameter with a slightly malicious smile.

"Insulting, but I accept it as a tribute. As a man who knows women," he continued, laughing, "I shall endeavor to share with you a little of my profound knowledge. Put this down as axiomatic. A man of the world,—you or I,—the moment he looks into a woman's eyes, exchanges twenty words with her or dances twice around a ballroom, knows instinctively one thing: either she is a coquette or she is not. If she is a coquette, she will fall for some man, not necessarily himself, but for some man.

Well, my boy, I have danced with Mrs. Mandriga, and she dances beautifully; but you might as well have danced with a clothes-horse, made eyes to a statue and whispered into a phonograph." Having made this speech of unusual length for him, he drew breath and repeated: "Larry, my boy, if you have lost your heart, you will lose your time. I myself have warned you. The woman has water in her veins!"

Delameter shook his head. "It is nothing personal. Queerer than that. Listen."

IN a few words he recounted the events of the afternoon. Van Royden, who had started to dress for the evening, remained, mouth open, a collar in one hand, a necktie in another, staring at his friend. "Well, I'll be damned!"

"Queer mix-up, isn't it?"

Van Royden gave vent to a long whistle. "You've said it. Yet it's like old Mandriga to do that, quite like him. I know that crowd—he was a welcher if there ever was one. Only one woman ever got the best of him, and she got him good and plenty—the big bundle—Kitty Stairs. Remember Kitty? Course you do, the 'Floradora' girl, who went abroad with Joe Dick's and ended up with some Austrian title. Mandriga was a bound, all right."

"So you think Mrs. Mandriga has water in her veins," intoned Delameter. He shook his head. "I'm not quite convinced. I see her as a slumbering volcano. Mandriga meant nothing to her. Money, position—that's all. Thirty-five years' difference, and she's every bit a woman, your opinion to the contrary. There must have been something on the side, or what the devil could he have put in that letter? Van, that's the act of a jealous man."

"My dear boy, everything gets known sooner or later. If any gossip's going around New York that I don't know—it doesn't exist! No, impossible!"

"Well, who's been in love with her?"

"Hundreds."

"Go back, then. What do you know of her? How did she start?"

"Let me think," Van Royden, stationing himself before a mirror, began meditatively to draw the ends of his cravat into the line that satisfied his fastidious taste. "Yes, a bit of mystery there. Her family? Let's see—Southern; Colonel Vane of Virginia, sah! Rather rum old customer—horses and gambling, but good old Southern blood—F. F. V. Mother ran off with some other man. The girl, I think, brought up by an aunt. . . . Wait a moment—I remember now. I knew there was a story. It was the way she picked up old Mandriga. She was abroad, Monte Carlo or something, and Mandriga turned up—maybe it was Deauville or Biarritz. Anyway, the story is, her bicycle collided with his motor and smashed her up."

"That's been done before," remarked Delameter softly.

"What of it? Suppose it was done on purpose. It took some grit to try it. She got a broken ankle out of it—laid up in his house for a week."

"Is this true?"

"As true as any other story."

"That's all you know?"

"Except that she was as poor as Job's turkey."

"But—any other name connected with hers before this?"

"Not to my knowledge. And when a woman marries anyone as prominent as Mr. Louis Mandriga, her past is apt to catch up with her, isn't it? Half the shyster lawyers in New York would be on her trail!"

"Yes, rather."

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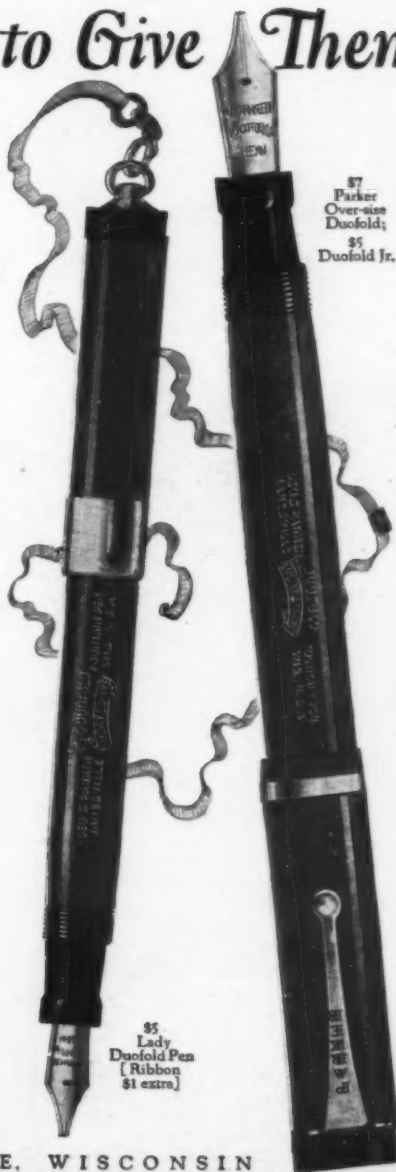
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"Of course, she married him for his money."

"Naturally."

"He would hate her for that, and the old boy could hate. Why seek any other explanation?"

"It might explain him. It doesn't explain her."

The telephone rang.

"See who it is."

Van Royden from the hallway called back: "Mrs. Mandriga would like to see you at eight. O. K.?"

"Good!" exclaimed Delameter, springing up. "Now to get somewhere."

THE first impression Delameter received on meeting Mrs. Mandriga that evening was that he was in the presence not of a client but of an adversary.

"The lady has made up her mind to reveal nothing," he thought.

"It's good of you to come," she began formally. "I hope I haven't upset your plans."

"No; I was expecting your call."

She led the way through the great library into a *salon* hung in red damask, and beyond that into what he knew was her own sitting-room—a room of the purest *Directoire*, painted ceiling, paneled walls, the doors with Greek medallions bodily transported from some ravished chateau.

"Shall I close the doors?"

She nodded, but immediately changing her mind, said: "No, better leave them open."

"She doesn't miss a trick," he thought shrewdly. "You can't listen at an open door."

Nevertheless she passed into her bedroom, where he heard a key turning in the lock before she returned.

"Make yourself comfortable and smoke if you wish."

Delameter, deceived by these precautions, was somewhat shaken in his first impression.

"Mr. Schnell left a copy of the will. Would you like to read it over again?"

"Thank you."

He went through it clause by clause, laid it down and looked up at her. Her blonde head, with the undulations which clung closely to the neck, gave her the appearance of a young girl. The brow was clear, the deep blue eyes unperplexed; nor was there any distinguishable trace of the nervous strain through which she had passed, unless in the fact that the delicate lips were set with unusual firmness.

"Well?"

"Well?"

"What do you think of it?"

"Mrs. Mandriga, just what do you want of me?" he threw out brusquely.

HER head, which had been momentarily averted from him, turned with her characteristic deliberation, and the eyes without surprise rested on his in profound inquiry. When she spoke, it was as always, after she had taken time to weigh twice the significance of his question.

"I wish to consult you as my lawyer, of course," she answered slowly. Then she awaited his answer.

"How am I to take that? Do you wish to give me all the facts and your entire confidence, or am I to be present as a sort of expert consultant to answer only when you question me?"

"We will begin with a few questions," she answered, smiling.

"You wish to know your legal rights?"

"I do."

"Very well, then. Such a will as this"—he designated the document with a contemptuous wave of his fingers—"wont stand in any court of law, not for one second. Nothing that may be contained in the sealed codicil, no matter how defamatory it might

prove to your own personal reputation, can possibly deprive you of your legal rights, your dower rights in the estate of your husband."

"That was my understanding."

"Provided—" He hesitated. "You will forgive me in seeking to cover every eventuality, no matter how improbable."

"Speak with the utmost candor."

"You are sure you mean that?"

"Absolutely!"

"Because in that case I shall expect you to be equally frank with me."

She nodded, but without direct reply.

"There is only one eventuality," he began deliberately, "that I can imagine which legally you need fear."

"Go on," she said, in her eagerness drawing her chair closer to him.

"Suppose you were not the legal wife of Louis Mandriga?"

"That of course is absurd, as you know. Our marriage was public—"

"Pardon me. That is not my meaning. There can be no question as to the ceremony. But supposing that this letter contains evidence, even let us say an intimation, that there had been a previous marriage, which invalidated the last one?"

"Are you speaking seriously, Mr. Delameter?"

"I am simply reviewing all the possibilities. Your late husband evidently believed that in the letter he left, there was a threat sufficiently terrifying to frighten you into accepting the will—a will which robs you of the legal rights that no legal process can take from you."

"But it seems to me you are insinuating that I was already married—"

"Or that your husband was already married. Suppose he had been secretly married, in which case, even though his wife should be dead today, your marriage would be invalidated." Struck by the suggestion, she remained silent, and little furrows began to show above her eyebrows. He continued: "These are suppositions only. As you prefer not to give me your entire confidence, I must leave them to your own consideration. I have mentioned the only eventuality you have to fear. This is all you have to fear legally," he added, intentionally emphasizing the word. "There are other considerations—of course."

"Go on, then." She pronounced the words so tranquilly, looking at him with her impassable gaze, that Delameter sprang up with an energy which showed all his irritation.

"Heavens! If we are to talk like this, what is the use? My dear Mrs. Mandriga, if you consult a doctor, you tell him everything. If you don't realize the gravity of your present position, don't come to me for advice. Why consult me if you wont put the facts before me? For unless I have all the facts, I am just talking in the air, and any opinion I may give is worthless! Really, I prefer to retire from the case."

"Sit down," she said, allowing a little smile of amusement to betray itself. "Be sure I shall know how to utilize your advice. The rest concerns me, only."

"I warn you," he answered, grumbling, "we are both losing our time."

"Continue, and leave it to me when and how I choose to enlighten you."

"VERY well, then. To resume: If you were not married at the time of your meeting Mandriga, or if he had not contracted such an obligation, even of the nature of a common-law wife, you have nothing to fear legally with the opening of this letter. Nothing else it may contain can prevent your enforcing your claim to what must amount to between five and ten millions."

"Nothing?"

"Nothing, madam, nothing can vitiate your legal rights even if the revelation

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should be of the most scandalous nature." He stopped, watching her closely for the effect on her of the last insinuation.

"As for instance?" she asked calmly.

"As I am in no position to judge what your relations were, you will forgive me if I prefer not to deal in mere suppositions."

"I prefer you should."

"Assume, then, that you had a lover. Mr. Mandriga's personal life was no secret. Nothing more natural than that, disillusioned, or from a feeling of retaliation—"

"It isn't possible for two persons," she interrupted suddenly, "to hate each other more thoroughly than we did."

"Exactly." He nodded in acknowledgment of this first confidence. "No matter what justice might lie on your side, if such a clandestine union existed and your husband discovered it—"

"Or imagined that it did exist," she corrected.

"As you wish," continued Delameter, slightly disappointed. "Suppose Mr. Mandriga, either knowing you had a lover or convinced that you must have one, and that the revelation of the fact would do you incalculable harm before the world, has embodied this slander in the body of the will, only—"

"Only?"

"Only then, Mrs. Mandriga, he must have had some definite person in mind."

"Why do you hesitate?"

"Because you place me in a difficult position."

"You mean to say that, if there were no reason for his suspicion, I should not have the slightest fear of opening the letter."

"That I confess is my thought."

"And you think it is only the truth that can destroy a woman, Mr. Delameter?" she asked quickly.

"I don't understand."

"Don't you realize the effect a lie can produce? My husband, hating me, can be revenged as completely by a lie, once it becomes public, once it is spread across every slander-loving sheet."

"I can conceive more," he took up as she ceased. "I can conceive that your husband, hating you, convinced that after his death you would marry again—let's say, even suspecting who that person would be—might seize upon his name to make such a marriage impossible. My dear lady, frankly, you are afraid of this letter?"

"I am."

"Of course, there must be some basis for this fear, or otherwise you would say to me: 'Notify Mr. Schnell that I shall contest this will.'"

"If I have nothing to fear?"

"Exactly."

"Unfortunately, it is not as simple as that," she took up, shaking her head.

"Let me ask you directly. It is my duty to do so. Good heavens, we are dealing with millions, not with pennies! Is there anything in your life or in his which legally might invalidate your marriage?"

"I will answer you this way: until you brought this to my attention, such a thought had never even occurred to me."

"Which is no answer at all," he remarked impatiently.

"On the contrary, I consider it complete."

"Can you say to me this: 'There is nothing in my past life before I met Mr. Mandriga, nothing since my marriage to him, that I am afraid to have disclosed to the world?'"

"Certainly I can say that."

DELAMETER, despite the calm of her immediate response, remained unconvinced. He arose nervously and began to pace backward and forward.

"Very well, then. I shall notify Mr. Schnell that we shall contest the will. That is your decision."

She shook her head. "No."

He stopped, amazed. "But—"

"I have not yet made up my mind."

He sat down, spread out his arms with an empty, despairing gesture and waited. "Why?"

"Because, knowing my husband, terrible as his vengeance has always been, there certainly is something more malignantly cruel in the background of all this. Whatever he has imagined, he wishes me by my own act to bring about the disclosure. It is because I know that he expected me to contest the will that I am afraid."

The longer the conversation continued, the more completely mystified Delameter remained.

"You saw Mr. Schnell," he said wearily. "Might I inquire as your legal adviser if anything was said in that interview that—"

"I learned nothing from him," she interrupted with a short, quick gesture of her hand.

"Does he know the contents of the letter?"

"Mr. Schnell is not human," she answered, tapping the table with her slim fingers.

Delameter understood perfectly what she meant by "human."

"But you have an impression?"

"He knows," she said, but without conviction.

"You sounded him?"

"Directly and indirectly."

"I see."

"If there was a way we could find out—" she said at last, looking at him steadily.

"As for instance, bribery or burglary?" he suggested, ironically.

"Any means would be justifiable!" she exclaimed, springing to her feet with the first overpowering emotion he had seen her display. But immediately controlling herself, she returned to her chair and continued in her habitual manner: "The probabilities are that my husband kept his own secret."

"That is my opinion." He watched her a moment and then arose. "Is there anything more you would like to ask me?"

She shook her head.

"You have made no decision?"

"No."

"While I warn you that you are still keeping me in the dark, let me resume my advice. Legally, nothing can take away your dower rights unless on your side or on his there is evidence of a previous marriage. Forgive the way I am forced to express myself. Otherwise, all that can happen to you by the disclosure of a real or imagined scandal would be the injury to your reputation. What that might involve, you alone will have to judge. Even at the worst, no matter if there were overwhelming proofs of your infidelity to your husband, legally you would not be deprived of your dower rights. That is the whole situation."

"As you see it?"

"I beg your pardon."

"As you see it?"

"As I see it, without the advantage of knowing what is in your mind—yes," he responded.

"And without an intimate knowledge of Mr. Mandriga's character, nor to what lengths he was willing to go to gain his end?"

"Possibly. But, without such knowledge, my advice to you is: refuse to accept this will. You are entitled to between five and ten million dollars at the least. Your position is unassailable, has been unassailable for years. Your late husband's reputation is well known. Public opinion would certainly uphold you. Remember, the dead are always wrong, particularly when the living have millions at their command."

She arose without in the slightest giving any evidence of the effect his advice might have produced upon her.

"Thank you. I realize the difficulties of your position. You have given me a good deal to think over."

"May I at least hope you will take no action before you have consulted me again?"

"Certainly." She gave him her hand. "By the way, how much time have I before I must make my decision known?"

"Two weeks."

CONVINCED that Mr. Schnell knew the secret of the fate which impended over her, Mrs. Mandriga tried twice again to penetrate behind the mask which the astute and inflexible lawyer opposed to her.

In the first interview she adopted the attitude of a weak woman throwing herself on his generosity. She was able to bring tears to her eyes, and in a moment when she seemed to be so hysterically overwrought that she could no longer be responsible for her actions, she seized the lawyer's wrinkled hand in both her warm young ones and laid it against her breast. Then falling on her knees, her face wet with tears, she exclaimed:

"Mr. Schnell, Mr. Schnell, don't drive me to do something you will regret all your life! I am only a woman, alone, frantic, a woman who is trying to protect her good name. Have pity—pity!" she cried, suffocated with emotion. "Oh, if you would give me even a word to guide me, at least tell me why he did this! What could make him strike such a cowardly blow, what reason, what reason?"

She fastened her gaze eagerly on him. But instead of any trouble such as might reasonably be occasioned by her distress, her tears, the touch of her hand, the spectacle of her kneeling there before him, she found nothing in the cold countenance but an expression of dispassionate curiosity. She realized that no such appeal could for an instant dispel the indifference and suspicion of a lifetime. She arose, fell into a chair, covered her eyes with a handkerchief, and said weakly:

"Please leave me, Mr. Schnell. You have seen to what humiliation you have reduced me. If you yourself were a party to this, you can enjoy your victory! Good day, Mr. Schnell."

"Madam, it was not I who wished this interview," he answered coldly; and profiting by her expressed wish, he turned and withdrew without having once departed from the mechanical correctness of his attitude.

ON the next occasion, she completely changed her tactics. This time, while giving him to understand that her mind was made up to fight with every means at her disposal, she presented herself as a woman driven to the wall, determined before the ruin which menaced her to bring down the whole edifice of the family.

"So you have determined to show me no consideration," she began coldly. "Very well. For seven years I have kept silent. I have protected the reputation of my husband and his family. Now that you force me to it, you will see what I am capable of. You wish a scandal. You will have a scandal that will rock society! Everything, everything in his past I will drag out for public inspection. I don't know what harm you may do me, but when I am through, there will not be a shred left of the Mandriga name, and you, you alone, will be responsible, Mr. Schnell: remember that."

"What I am to understand, Mrs. Mandriga," he responded precisely, "is that you will oppose the probating of the will?"

"Whatever communication I have to make to you," she answered, with a fury that deceived even him, "will be made in the presence of my lawyer."

"I must remind you that by tomorrow your decision must be known."



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"You still are determined to drag before the public this dirty mess? You still persist in dishonoring the whole family, Mr. Schnell?"

"Madam, I again remind you that I am not a principal in this transaction, but an agent, and that I have no option whatever but to continue to act as that agent."

"Tomorrow, then!" she exclaimed, dismissing him with a gesture of uncontrollable rage.

THE following day Larry Delameter arrived in a state of mental excitement impossible to describe. During the two weeks which had elapsed from the reading of the will, a dozen conjectures had succeeded themselves in his imagination. In the beginning he had decided that in her past, as a young girl, some frightful secret must lie hidden. Next he had visualized her as a supreme adventuress, one of those great dramatic artists of private life, who are able to assume a rôle and carry it out to the minutest fidelity without once betraying themselves. He divined, back of the correct and dignified attitude toward the world, a past of tempestuous extremes, mysteries of passion and poverty, of tortuous adventures, culminating in one stroke of supreme daring. The next day she had become a woman utterly devoid of heart or senses, guided only by an inflexible will. When this failed to convince him, as he remembered the cold calm of the serene brow and the open gaze, he had visualized a woman of tremendous passions, passions for hating and passions for loving, contemptuous of danger, a miracle of dissimulation and cunning, reserving all the natural youth of her being for one hidden lover.

Each supposition in turn had convinced him and each in turn he had rejected, irritated and unsatisfied. Of one thing only was he now certain: that never for an instant, come what might, would she sacrifice a dollar of her lawful interests. However, at last the *dénouement* was at hand. At last some light would penetrate into this mystery. He looked forward to it with keen anticipation. It would be quite an amusing moment, the moment when she would drop the mask and show the real self.

The taxi he had taken was caught in a jam. Instead, therefore, of arriving first for a moment's confidential conversation with his client, he found himself, to his great vexation, entering the Mandrigha library in company with Mr. Schnell. His first glance was to his client, and the first glance reassured him. There was about her at that moment such an air of tranquil decision, that he said to himself, satisfied:

"Good! That doesn't look like a woman who had renounced a fortune."

"Mr. Delameter," began Mr. Schnell, immediately after the greetings,—he remained standing as though to emphasize the formality of the occasion,—"I don't have to remind you that today is the last day, according to the will of my late client, Louis Mandrigha, on which Mrs. Mandrigha must announce her intentions."

"We are quite aware of that fact," responded Delameter pleasantly.

"And may I inquire what your decision is?"

"Mrs. Mandrigha is ready to give it, I believe."

The two lawyers turned to Mrs. Mandrigha, who without hesitation, replied:

"Mr. Schnell, before announcing to you my determination, I wish to recall to you that during the last six years my late husband openly and defiantly took one mistress after another; that six months before his death he set up a trust for a woman known as Laura Edmonston and her two children, manifestly his own, that this trust was for the sum of four hundred thousand dollars. During the same period, despite

every provocation, not one word of scandal has been attached to my name. Furthermore, during this time I did everything to cover up the private life of my husband. In return for this, my husband leaves a will in which he virtually disinherits me, and joins to this humiliation the threat of some further evidence of his hatred in a sealed letter which is to be held over my head. Well, Mr. Schnell, after careful consideration, I have finally made my decision."

"And that is, madam?"

"I have decided to make no contest."

"Mrs. Mandrigha!"

She checked, by a movement full of dignity, the protest that involuntarily emanated from Delameter.

"You may be surprised at this action. It is very simple. The position which I have won for myself before the world, and I alone, is more precious to me than the millions which would come to me covered with dirt. This is my unalterable decision."

"I accept it as such," said Schnell phlegmatically. "Mr. Delameter will put before you the paper that requires your signature."

"Thank you, and good day." She turned to Delameter, who had collapsed into a chair. "Now that that is settled, we might as well enjoy our tea."

And as quietly as though she had done nothing more than give an order to her chauffeur, she seated herself and, looking at her lawyer, with a touch of amusement, said:

"One lump or two?"

THREE days later the same persons met once more in the great library where the portrait of the late Louis Mandrigha seemed to be looking down from the wall on them with a malicious enjoyment.

"Mrs. Mandrigha, the will of your late husband having been admitted to probate without contest," said Mr. Schnell, "I am now following the final instructions of my client in delivering to you the letter which is referred to in his last codicil."

"Give it to me."

The lawyer drew forth from his breast pocket a long envelope, moved mechanically forward and presented it to her with a punctilious bow. She took it, turned it over, verifying the seals and the line of red ribbon which for greater precaution had been drawn twice around it.

"There is no duplicate?"

"None." He drew himself up, coughed and said impressively: "I should like to state now that I am absolutely ignorant of what it may contain."

"Is that absolutely true, Mr. Schnell? True without any mental reservations?"

"The document was handed to me as you see it. No further explanation was offered me then or at any other time."

"So that no living person knows what it contains?"

"I am certain of that."

"Thank you." And as he remained waiting, perhaps in the hope that he too might be permitted to gratify his curiosity, she added: "I shall not detain you any longer, Mr. Schnell."

When he had gone somewhat reluctantly out of the room, she raised her eyes slowly to Delameter's:

"Can I believe him?"

"A man like Schnell is incapable of a deliberate lie. He would refuse to answer a question, but he would never perjure himself." He added with a smile: "The ethics of an older generation."

"Likewise he would be incapable of withholding or substituting a document?"

"Absolutely."

"So that in your opinion this is the original?"

"I would swear to it."

"That is my judgment also."

She remained a moment, studying the in-

scription, seemingly torn by conflicting impulses.

"If you prefer to be alone—"

"Don't go," she exclaimed, more quickly than was her wont. She glanced at the fireplace, where a fire was crackling, took a step toward it and stopped. "Mr. Delameter?"

Her voice was so faint that he was not certain that she had called him. One glance at her face convinced him. He came quickly to her side. Without speaking, she extended the document to him, turned and walked to the table, where for a moment, while he waited, mystified, she remained with both hands resting on the top. All at once, as though victorious, she turned, and without any further trace of weakness, said:

"Now put it in the fire."

"Unopened?" he cried involuntarily.

"Unopened."

He could not believe his senses.

"What?" he stammered. "This letter, you want me to burn this letter that has cost you five, at least five, million dollars?"

"Exactly, and for that reason."

"But—"

"Do as I say."

"Without knowing—you will regret it!"

"I have thought it all out. Please, but be quick."

He went to the fireplace. There again, with his arms stretched forth, he turned incredulously to her for some sign of relenting, but he found her so implacably resolute, and the gesture she made was so imperious that, hesitating no longer, he thrust the letter into the flames, saw it catch fire, twisting and writhing until, reduced to ashes, it disappeared with a final contortion up the chimney. Then he dropped into a chair, took out his handkerchief and mopped his forehead.

"Beyond me—I give it up."

WHEN he looked at her again, she was standing gazing up at the portrait, her head thrown a little backward, her lips set in irony, the pupils of her eyes dilated, as though opposing to the malice above an inflexible scorn. He rose and, approaching her, blurted out:

"No, there is no one like you! Never to know, never! Well, I couldn't have done it—never in the world!"

But, heedless of his exclamation, still looking at the portrait, she spoke:

"He hated me; how he hated me! If you knew him as I knew him! He had the ingenuity of a devil; only he could have thought this out! He hated me because he could never break me, because never once did I give him the satisfaction of knowing how he made me suffer. If once I had broken down, this would never have happened, I suppose." She turned and looked at Delameter, who, struck by her intensity, was staring at her wide-eyed. "Do you know what I did when I came back after the funeral, here in my own room, alone at last! I flung down my widow's veils and danced upon them!"

"Yes, but," he cried, recoiling before the fury in her eyes, "but even then I don't understand. Why burn that letter?"

"Why?" she exclaimed impatiently. "What was the use? Do you think anything makes any difference now?"

"Mrs. Mandrigha, is this the real reason?" he broke in abruptly.

She turned, looked at him a long moment and slowly shook her head.

"No."

"I was certain of it."

"I'll tell you my real reason. Supposing after having sacrificed everything for my reputation, supposing I had opened that letter?"

"Well?"

"And found—nothing."



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"Nothing—what do you mean?"

"A blank sheet."

"But why?"

"Because a letter that is sealed may contain everything or nothing, and that nothing is as terrible as the worst. That would have been the last refinement of cruelty, the revenge that would have been complete. He was capable of imagining that and gloating over it, day by day."

Mr. Delameter, struck by the suggestion which had never occurred to his imagination, followed her glance to the portrait. From the wall, heavy-lidded, malicious and cruel, the enigmatical gaze of the late Louis Mandriga seemed to be watching them attentively.

A YACHT DARLING

(Continued from page 65)

—of passion and art—both to be perhaps a looked-for boon to the world.

"They exchange impressions. Talk to each other, intensely, they suppose—although really rather primly—about the purple mountains which both, being from a flat country, have seen for the first time off the printed or the celluloid sheet."

As an aside, she said: "Effective, don't you think, to have a first long shot of *Lily* looking dreamily at the mountains? Then a close-up?"

Joe nodded in a manner that committed him to nothing.

"It doesn't take too long for *Lily* to get on as an extra. She has a graceful body and a ladylike look. That year the movies needed ladyish extras. She can give the right nod to a waiter, handle a salad fork—they were running salad-fork scenes in most of that year's pictures—and she could use a fan. Fan-users, you know, are born, never made. But it mustn't be lost sight of that Nature did all this for *Lily*. Her people, in Kansas, were middling poor—father a clerk in a general store. Of course,—there was no telling from Ava's businesslike tone if this were meant lightly or to be taken in dead earnest,—"prenatal influence may have accounted. Possibly *Lily's* mother dipped too deeply into mail-order fashion catalogues.

"Anyway, *Lily* and *Will* began to celebrate once a week—chow mein and black coffee and cigarettes. When a small town is just back of you, black coffee and cigarettes seem so devilish and high-brow. *Lily* felt 'there.' She gets a small part. Acquits herself pretty well. Feels financially able to get a French blue *charmeuse* evening-gown. That winter, French blue was the rage.

"*Will* was taking care of himself, too. Gets next to a director by doing some typing for him. Begins to take an interest in window displays of ready-made knickers and puttees. That winter, directors and their aides were strong on the knicker-and-puttee thing."

JOE was looking rather intently at Ava now. Perhaps because of her juggling of the historical present and the past tenses.

"One Saturday night *Lily* breaks a date with *Will*. A young blood from the East sees her at a club dance Friday evening and makes a date for the next night. Some night! *Lily* went home at dawn, with a wine-stain on her first evening-gown, but with a fervid giggling sense of everything being all right with the world, which was a lovely place where men loved, and women were loved, and moon-silvered ocean breakers were beautifully created by Nature for night bathing. The Eastern young man had suggested for the near future a moonlit beach party.

"This particular young man is called home by his parent in ten days or so. *Lily* misses him. But he has successors. To all parts

"Yes, he might have imagined that," he said after a moment.

HOWEVER, there is a personal reason back of all this," he said confidently to himself when five minutes later he had left the house. "That reason is her security—her future. She has been protecting some one else—clever woman! In a year she will marry him, and if it is not a great fortune, then may I never know anything about women."

But six months later, to the surprise of everyone, Mrs. Mandriga, having sold her jewels, married a young mining engineer, whom, it was said, she had known from childhood, and went to live in the West.

of the world has traveled the news, you know, that Hollywood is earth's best peach-basket. One may pick 'em off the trees, the ground, or out of the breakers. They've all rolled here—pretty little soft pink-cheeked things from the four corners of the earth. Most of them longing to be picked.

"Comes along a young man who owns a yacht. No piking beach-parties for him. A gay gang does Catalina one week-end. *Lily* was glad she was alive—those three days. Rather peeved to cut gayety short and get back to picture-making Monday morning. Oh, she still had achieved only a narrow niche before the camera.

"But her recreations seemed to have helped her work. She does a small dinner part so well that she made a hit that almost landed a contract. The chief reason no landing resulted was because a business slump happened just then. Even stars were affected. *Lily* sulked, and told a few young men that she was just naturally born unlucky. They strove to comfort her—after their fashion.

"Such comforting is educative. And *Lily* is the type to garner grain from all fields. She gets the learning that was not handed her back home—in Kansas.

"This *Will* person teaches her a little—at the start. Offers her a cigarette—while the two are sitting on a wooden bench on the boulevard, eagerly watching Hollywood life as it flows past, and each trying not to let the other detect naïve eagerness even for the sight of a sloppy eucalyptus dropping its bark. She doesn't smoke—and doesn't desire initiation—in public. She has been told of the dire result of one's first smoke! He tells him: 'Not just now. Later, perhaps.' He is relieved—she suspects that a long time afterward. He doesn't exactly like to be seen in the street with a smoking girl; and besides, he had only two cigarettes in the pasteboard box so nonchalantly proffered, and few dimes to buy another package.

"But in time *Lily* learns to smoke. And from one giver of beach parties she learns how to make Roquefort dressing. From another, how best to sauce stewed clams. One yacht-owner teaches her a few Spanish words. Another, the difference between an Inness and a Rembrandt. 'See that red descending sun, cutie? That's the one. Don't forget. We'll make a connoisseur out of you yet. Now, lamp the gloomy coats and funeral perspectives and somber faces of the other artist guy. Think you can always recall which is the whitest? As aid to memory, sweetness, bear in mind that, likely, the last named wouldn't have given a lira to use you as a model. Too light, too light!' The yacht-owner laughs heartily.

"Dressmakers and directors, too. They teach her. When the first blue *charmeuse* gives way to black velvet and silver, *Lily* knows enough to sulk because she hasn't the right-looking pearls. Hollywood doesn't insist that pearls be the kind that must lie at

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intervals in the bosom of their mother, the sea, to remain lustrous. But imitations ought to cost at least eighty dollars for a thirty-inch string!

"In short, *Lily* evolves." Ava paused to watch a spiral of white smoke from her cigarette curl upward—upward like a wraith. "Put it this way: In her first year, she wants to realize art's ultimate dream. In her second, she wants to be a star. In her third, she wants a mansion in Beverly Hills. Ambition *diminuendo*, you see—"

Joe broke in, a bit boredly: "Oh, I get the type. But really, it's not so new that it will lift the fans from their thirty-cent seats—which when all is told, is the real mission of producers—"

"Wait. In her fourth year *Lily* takes a great interest in the Asiatic question. Japs! So essential, those oily little Orientals, to life as some Occidentals would like to live. But the little men are so of one mind as to their own value per hour. *Lily* grits her white teeth at times because she can't really afford any kind of a decent house, with a yard and a yard-man. In her fifth year, she doesn't care so much for a house and servants. Just so she can hold her own in clothes at the Coconut Grove—"

IT was at this point that Joe Stuckow, after a divining look at Ava from under lowered lids, began to interlace his long fingers thoughtfully.

"In her sixth year *Lily* begins to lose her looks a little," went on Ava. "And her temper—a good deal. In a woman, loss of temper often presages loss of courage. Or self-respect, or *morale*—what word you prefer. Symbolical—like branches noisy in the wind when the trunk of the tree has begun to decay. Chesty subtitle? Compressed, of course.

"*Lily* begins to dislike being awake after she has gone to bed. Dislikes to think about, say, her seventh year in Hollywood. Oh, she's making a living. But *Lily* calls existence rotten. Rotten! *Lily* sulks, aware of some women's greater prosperity. Now for the meaty bits:

"Perhaps *Lily's* real education begins the midnight she is summarily put off a palatial yacht that for weeks has been riding the Pacific like a gold-and-white goddess in a palanquin. The yacht-owner's pretty young Eastern wife arrives. She is hysterical. *Lily* is horribly annoyed, at first, at seeing a perfectly good week-end spoiled. Then—

"Then she is much displeased to find that the yacht-owner, a rather stout young man with a tow-colored mustache about the size of a tooth-brush, is acting much like a small boy caught at a jam-jar. He droops his stout blond head sheepishly and tries to hold his wife's hand—a hand blazing, by the way, with diamonds, from a railroad-president father, or from hubby—and he says: 'Rina, can't you make allowances for a man's weaknesses? I was dull—and with you in New York—'

"I am very tired," retorts the pretty jeweled wife icily, 'of your yacht darlings! You collect them so unceasingly—whether you are standing off the Maine or the California coast. This instant choose between them and me!'

"He chooses. *Lily* and the other girls and a crowd of disgruntled young men in their tricky Tuxedos are removed—much as a suddenly energetic housewife removes dirt from a cupboard. Whisk—sweep! Toss! White shoulders and black patent-leather overnight bags and Tuxedos go over the white-and-gold side of the yacht—into small-boats—to shore. A silver Pacific moon continues to pour down its liquid light; the foothills stand dark and reproving; waves are shadow and glitter, tossing on each other.

"After this episode *Lily* coarsens. Naturally! Upper lip takes on a little habitual curl. Makes nasty remarks anent wives.

Wives! *Lily's* shrug categories them with wasps—or the moths that eat one's river-mink dolman."

JOE STUCKOW removed a dead cigarette from his lips and observed: "Let's condense. How does *Lily* finish?"

Ava flipped a page of manuscript. "Girl at the Arms desk wrote this. Some collaboration supplied by me. Clever girl. *Lily's* last subtitle is a bright little play on the picture's title—'A Yacht Rat.' Clever? A rat hunting for cheese in any old ship's hold—just cheese. Longish, sharpened face, more gray than white, with front teeth a little protuberant, and hair sleek to the head like wet skin. Oh, *Lily* has a choice of ends. A whimpering slide into the Pacific. Or she might wander into the Ventura mountains and be pecked by crows, after losing her way and starving to death. This might be a bit too far-fetched. Actually *Lily* after years of picture-taking is too posted on locations to get lost. She might take the veronal route. Pretty old stuff—the last. Always fairly good, though."

"What about *Will*, who started with her?" As he spoke, Joe Stuckow did not look at Ava.

Not reading from the manuscript, she said lightly enough:

"Oh, he plays a small enough part. No big share of *Lily's* story. Not essential. You see, he and *Lily* may not have really been in love. Each at the start found the other a friendly, naive ear—that was all. Of course, *Lily* should have fanned his liking, and fanned her own too, and lived a sweet and touching true-as-steel life with him. But in that case—Ava's smile was light, was cynical—*Lily* wouldn't have had even one poor little skinny reel of action in the whole story."

"No."

"Say—say that *Will* meets the charming daughter of a powerful director, likes her a little, is liked by her a little. Or more. Say that a prominent star once or twice nods at him, like a female Jove—and *Will* is somewhat engrossed by the cross-currents of his own career. Make it a close-up—symbolical. A candle burning. It might have burned high and white—but gets blown out by the gusts of air produced by *Will* hurrying along his path and *Lily* looking around avidly to see what life offers her."

"I see," said Joe Stuckow.

Silence for an interval. Then he spoke guardedly:

"Might develop into a good picture—with the right woman lead."

"I want the part."

He lifted dark, quizzical eyebrows.

"No," she admitted to the unspoken comment. "I've never stepped so high as a leading rôle. But what I thought was—" She leaned to him, with businesslike suavity. "You surely know some small independent producer who'll take a chance on a picture—but who can't pay star salaries. I think I can do the part pretty well. You're a free-lance most of the time. You'd direct this well, I know. How about it?"

Silence for a longer interval. Then a man's eyes met and held a woman's eyes. They began to discuss studio rent, extras' salaries, releasing privilege (or releasing chance), a certain continuity-writer and certain independent producers.

THERE was a good deal of talk concerning the tricks employed by Ava Leander to create the illusion of naive and lovely youth in the first scenes of the picture "A Yacht Darling," which was produced by two youngish Hollywooders of Irish extraction and without much financial backing. For Ava did succeed in presenting an illusion of youth—that inimitable youth of the careless, hopeful, eager teens!

A surgical facial lift, of course—ice-packs,



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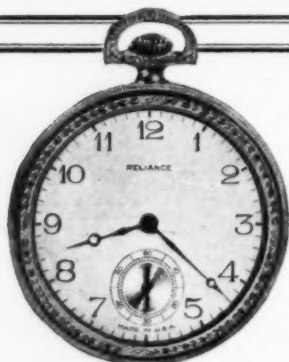
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tonic lotions. But there must have been something beyond such extraneous aids to a clean-cut youthful jaw-line. It was odd. In a community where every trick for re-vivification of flesh and color is known and freely employed, it was agreed that Ava must have at her command a trick or two of her own.

For she was by no means youthful in reality. That was known. Like black angels, her recorded Hollywood years stood at her shoulder and gave testimony. On the Septimus and other important lots, in her make-up, she passed for anything from twenty-eight to thirty-six. Questioned, she would have coldly let you know that she was twenty-two. Twenty-two is the Blue Bird year of Hollywood—but never to be captured!

In late morning, waking pettishly to the glaring white light of her east-facing room at the Geranium Arms, Ava looked to be a haggard, puffy, sullen thirty. Actually, by a Bible in her home town, she was twenty-six.

But in the first few scenes of "A Yacht Darling" she was just—young. A thin, eager-eyed girl, she sat on a street bench, under a sloppy eucalyptus tree, and dreamed, like a Bernhardt in the making.

JOE STUCKOW directed a neat little street-scene. A stream of life flowing rapidly past the girl—Hollywood life. Some limousines. Some lovely ladies who were "there." Some gentlemen in Inverness capes and silk hats. The purple foothills beyond—their peaks swathed in gossamer. A street-fruit-er's cart of pomegranates and bananas.

As the picture was being made, something else happened of significance. In the beginning, Miss Dessy Bloomington had hovered around importantly and with a suggestion of impudence in her attitude toward the leading woman. As scene followed scene, however, Miss Bloomington's importance of manner wavered slightly—and a sort of puzzled respect began to mark her stares at the acting Ava.

Miss Dessy stared and became taciturn as Lily disintegrated morally, mentally, spiritually and physically. Two producers, of no large financial affiliations, who were staking, not much but something, it is true, on the picture, watched intently, without saying much. Joe Stuckow and a minor continuity-writer conferred daily, saying much.

There was a great deal of comment as to how Ava achieved the final physical signs of her disintegration. A make-up box is potent, of course, but there was a rumor that a surgical facial lift had been surgically "unlifted"—that Ava, with black coffee and a sullen will-power, had gone sleepless seventy-two consecutive hours in order to appear one morning at the studio with the right shade of sullen haggardness.

Undoubtedly it was true that during half a week she registered such a ragged condition of nerves that Joe Stuckow several times lost his temper, and the two small independent producers held grim private consultations with each other. They were taking a chance as it was, glumly they reminded each other. It was true that in Hollywood chances must be taken—or an unprofitable, unchanceful course followed! It was true that in this picture, under Joe's economical direction, yacht scenes were quite inexpensive, consisting mostly of a segment of gilded rail and a painted Pacific—studio-set stuff. Yet somehow, with that "prop" segment of yacht railing, and that painted ocean, two scenes managed to fasten themselves in the beholders' memories.

In the first scene, a girl with her new, shiny patent-leather week-end bag was bustled from yacht to boat, much like a basket of stale vegetables to be returned to market. She pouted at the treatment. She showed the naive surprise of youthful pretti-

ness at unexpected mistreatment. And then, slowly, while over a shoulder she watched her erstwhile host, a stout little tow-haired husband, squirm in front of his wife, and from being ribald become sheepish—why, slowly, a young pretty lip curled unpleasantly. It coarsened her face, that curl of lip. It remained on her face.

The second scene was some time later. Another yacht, another yacht-owner. An older, unhealthier, worse-tempered man. He was the type who having failed in life morally, physically and financially, uses anyone at hand for a scapegoat. The yacht was mortgaged. And he had not that wherewith to buy dewy-lipped youth.

Lily, who was older than once she had been, sat at a small table in a dingy and uncleanly *salon*. He had known Lily a long time. Querulously (in subtitles) he was blaming her for various misfortunes which now had come upon his embittered head.

"Women like you are rats! Always nibbling at a man. Making trouble for him with his wife and children. Always creeping after him."

This, of course, in subtitles. Lily, seated beside a small tarnished table, did not trouble to reply. She was occupied with a small plate of salted wafers and Brie. Indifferent to anything except her hunger of the moment, with a small knife she spread the cheese upon a wafer and nibbled.

And having eaten one to its last crumb, she spread another with cheese—and nibbled, nibbled. . . . Her front teeth, by make-up had been elongated and a little pointed. Thereby a rodentlike look had been marvelously effected.

Lily's end required a lengthy discussion. In this discussion it was significant that not much attention was paid to Miss Dessy Bloomington's chatter, and not a great deal, either, to the scenarists or continuity-writer or producers. Joe Stuckow and Ava did the conferring. Veronal was early voted down. Overworked, and not particularly appropriate, said Ava. Mountain exposure was frowned upon by Joe. Finally Ava suggested the drowning of Lily—a misstep on a gangplank, and then the greedy uplapping of the night waters. So it was decided.

THERE was a preview. Hollywood attended. There is this about Hollywood: It has its faults; it is self-seeking and garrulous in the main; and malicious, mayhap, and inoculated more with self-partisanship in season and out than with Christian charity. But all faults may be redeemed by one virtue; and Hollywood has one virtue. To good work, to that spark which mayhap was given to light man from earth to the stars, Hollywood makes deep and grave and respectful obeisance.

Having previewed, Hollywood stepped back and stared respectfully at Ava Leander. In unaffected surprise, that is true. So she was capable of *that*? Well, now—good girl! Hats off—and congratulations! Oh, the picture might not roll in the shekels, although it was a catching thing, at that, and would not prove a flop. Much was forgiven Ava! Much would never be recalled against Ava.

Ava—or Lily. She was a little tearful and a little laughing at the close. Presently Joe Stuckow detached himself from the company of a pretty daughter of a powerful producer and came across the foyer to drive Ava home.

He did not have a great deal to say. Nor she. But his hand curled over hers, held it. Ava's fingers returned the pressure.

Perhaps an hour later, Ava said inconsequentially: "I did not get a surgical facial lift, Joe. I just gritted my teeth—and made myself feel fit."

"Give me a little credit for eyesight," he begged. "I knew that—in the drowning your soaked-back hair didn't reveal any scars."



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MATED

(Continued from page 78)

the sink. Half-past eleven. She'd have to set the table for Martin's lunch; and since the rain was over, she might have a few minutes to scatter grass-seed on the spots where the old lawn persisted in its baldness. Mr. Wendt, the fish man, had told her that seed took hold best after rain.

Hurrying into the dining-room, she reached into a corner cupboard for her imitation Wedgwood plates. She had bought the set for twelve dollars from a local dealer, and they were part of her improvement plan. As she worked about the dining-room, the change praised her. The gloomy blue walls had brightened to butter-color—she herself had put on the paint. Delft blue were the kitchen chairs and Victorian table which she had discovered in the attic; Sid Fletcher, of Fletcher Bros., hardware dealers, had been cajoled into knocking the spindles from that table, planing it down into something inoffensive. The curtains, a blue-and-white flowered print, had cost her fifteen cents a yard at Bird Harbor, ten minutes by bus from Saug Point.

At a quarter of twelve the table was laid and a bunch of pink Dorothy Perkins roses placed nicely at center. Lucinda always tried to make her table attractive, for she wanted Martin to feel, as she did, that this was their home, to be loved and enjoyed together. She took enormous pride in her efforts to reclaim the house. The continuous planning and managing had charmed her industrious heart, diverted her from some of the memories which should have lain heavy on her conscience. . . . It often surprised her to think how little she really cared—only sometimes a ghost would arise in the night when he was asleep, and ask her an unanswerable question.

She was wondering that morning when she put on a pair of shabby gloves and went out to sow grass-seed. In the yard she paused and gazed dreamily. Her year of work, responsibility and pleasant worry had plumped her a little, brought a certain matronly fullness to her cheeks. Had you seen her there, scattering seed over a small hummocky square which she herself had bitten off with a dull lawn-mower, you would have pronounced it a picture of happy young wifehood.

And Lucinda was happy. Even as she stood watching a young robin delving for worms after the shower, studying the silvery moisture on the old box-trees by the door, marking the pink procession of hollyhocks bursting into bloom along the shakily picket fence, she hugged herself with a little secret delight. "It's ours!" she thought, and could have cried for joy, although she thought in figures of speech. But it would be theirs in time, she knew, the house, the garden, the high, ancient locusts, elms and maples. . . . She didn't know exactly how, but she trusted in the future with the same singleness of faith that had brought her there.

Along the asphalt road beyond the trees the citizens of Saug Point were rolling toward their noonday dinner. Most of them looked up and bowed pleasantly; Saug Point was beginning to receive her as a member of the community. Fletcher Bros.' truck came lumbering by, and Sid Fletcher at the wheel made a half-hearted motion toward his hat, then thought better of it and waved his hand jauntily. Captain Ed Moon's scarred Ford approached with the beating of tom-toms; Mr. Sage, the storekeeper, having locked his ice-cream and kerosene parlor for a reposeful hour, shambled slowly by.

Then, with tires that smacked with satisfaction on the hot, soft surface of the road, a brightly polished closed car came toward Lucinda from the direction of the

bank; even at a distance she marked it as Mr. Gail Rodney's. Saug Point's man of property and Martin's boss, Mr. Rodney had never taken the trouble to recognize her either in public or in private; possibly this was because Lucinda was an Episcopalian, a doctrine of which Mr. Rodney disapproved with all the ardor of his Presbyterian soul. It was something of a shock to her, then, when she saw him slow down and stop at their gate.

"Good morning, Mrs. Cole!" A thin, fallow face with narrow gray eyes peered out the open window, and a cautious hand raised an imitation Panama hat.

"Oh, good morning, Mr. Rodney!" Lucinda was confused.

"Rain's come in mighty handy, aint it, Mrs. Cole?"

"It certainly has, Mr. Rodney."

He bored his keen little eyes across the yard and into the old orchard, a jungle of burdock, milkweed and nettles.

"Wouldn't do no harm to put a plow into that orchard, Mrs. Cole. Them weeds'll eat you out of house and home."

"I was thinking of cutting them down, Mr. Rodney."

"You?" He opened his dry lips to a dry cackle. "Well, you'll work it out some way. A fine young married couple like you just got to remember that the Lord has joined you together for purposes of his own. Fine piece of property here, Mrs. Cole."

"That's what Martin and I think. We're both of us in love with this place."

"Get hold of it," advised Mr. Rodney, putting his foot on his starter. "Get hold of it. Property's doubled in value up to Bird Harbor. Keep your eye on Saug Point. . . . Well, good morning, Mrs. Cole."

HE was gone before the astonished Lucinda could speak. What had happened to Mr. Rodney that he had melted so suddenly and paused at her gate to gossip of weeds and real-estate values? She was still pondering this point, when another car, a creaking and shrieking flivver, pulled up at the gate, and a jolly, fat, bow-legged gentleman in clericals scrambled out and came glowingly toward her.

"You aren't going to scold me!" she cried, and rushed forward to take his hands.

"Am I the village scold?" he laughed. "And what have you done to invite my attack?"

"Oh!" She pretended to be hurt. "Then you didn't notice that I wasn't at church last Sunday."

"Yes, you were." Dr. Corless gestured with one of his knotty hands. "This is your church, my dear."

"I'm glad you think so, Dr. Corless," said Lucinda, moved by what he said.

"I don't like to preach out of the pulpit." He held a half-smile, apology for his seriousness. "But of all the young married couples I know, you two are the most successful."

"Why do you say that?" she asked, and a strange tightness had come into her throat. "I've watched you. I suppose the whole village has watched you too. Lucinda, I'm a queer cuss for a parson."

"Maybe. You're about the only one I could ever stand for fifteen minutes at a stretch."

"You're kind to be cruel. But I have some notions about marriage that the Bishop won't approve, I imagine." She remembered St. Swithin's, and was sorry for him.

"What ideas?" she prompted, curiosity becoming morbid.

"Well, for instance—" He seated himself on the steps, removed his hat and stroked his white hair. "For instance, I can't conscientiously say that a preacher is inspired

by God every time two humans, male and female, step before him and ask him to open the marriage service at the place where it says, 'Whom God hath joined together.' How do they know, how do I know, that God has joined them together? All I can do is to furnish the service and sign the certificate. I can join them together. Yes. But I can't furnish the durable sort of love that makes them want to stay joined together. And that's all that marriage ought to be."

"Durable love, you mean?"

"Yes. And I like the way you two young people have carried on. I don't believe you even know what a struggle you've gone through. In the average case there would have been a row in six months—maybe three. You'd have hated the way the roof leaks, and he'd have told you to go somewhere where the roof's waterproof. You wouldn't have gone, probably, and then the tragedy would begin. But you, Lucinda—well, you've gone at it as if it were the best fun in the world."

"It has been fun," she told him with shining eyes.

He patted her rough-gloved hand gently and said with one of his jolly laughs: "The trouble with us parsons is that we talk too much. We need editing."

"Wont you stay to lunch and talk some more?" she begged, though worried a little that she hadn't stew enough for three.

"I wish I could. But there's been a motor accident. Two drunks in a Ford. They aren't getting much attention here, so I'm going to take them to St. Luke's Hospital."

"Are they members of your congregation?"

"Oh, my child! Don't joke the old man. They may be Catholics or Jews or Methodists or Holy Rollers, for all I know. But they're pretty sick." He paused, as though checking a word that might be interpreted as self-praise, and asked suddenly: "How's Martin getting along at the bank?"

"He seems to be doing very well. Of course he isn't making what he should. Jerry Malone offered him a job at the lace works where he might do better. But it's so uncertain that we both think he ought to keep on here awhile longer."

She hesitated. Should she tell him what was in her mind? Finally came a shred of it. "I don't like Martin working in a bank. He's a biologist, and I think he ought to be doing the work he likes." For this Dr. Corless offered nothing, and she brightened to say: "But there's quite a future in banking."

"With Uncle Gail Rodney?" Cynicism unusual to Dr. Corless.

"You know," Lucinda said slyly, "Mr. Rodney did the funniest thing just now. He actually spoke to me!"

"No! What did he talk about?"

"Weeds," she smiled.

"He would," remarked the clergyman, and arose to go.

A NEAT station-wagon rolled slowly by, a tragic, handsome farmer's woman of forty at the wheel. She nodded, and Lucinda asked: "Who is she? I see her often, but I don't know her."

"She calls herself Mrs. Marcken," said Corless shortly.

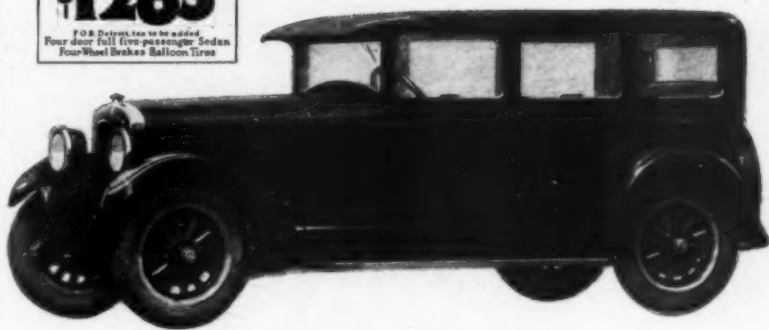
"Calls herself?"

"Yes. She isn't married, you know."

"Oh." Lucinda caught her breath and looked after the vanishing wagon.

"Marcken is a German farmer—lives around the bend on the East Spring Road. They've been together about twelve years now, and there are two children. It was something about his wife in Germany—she's still alive, I imagine. This woman was a widow—her father still keeps a garage in Bird Harbor. She has a great deal of character, and the Marckens have grown

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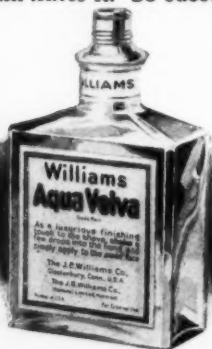
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RED BOOK 12-55



very prosperous. Take a look at their farm next time you go their way."

"Twelve years is a long time," said Lucinda gravely.

"They'll always stick together, I think. It's funny. They look so domestic and respectable and—well, married."

"Not married!" protested Lucinda with a sudden heat. "That word always sounds so—so sort of dead."

"Why should it?" asked Dr. Corless at the gate. "It's brought nothing but happiness to you. And I'll tell you another thing, my dear: Even out here there's a social disapproval that counts; and that's the fly in Mrs. Marcken's ointment, I think. She has love and she has children and prosperity, but she'd give a lot if she could look her neighbors straight in the eye—"

"And tell them to go to hell," laughed Lucinda. Dr. Corless laughed, too.

"Here comes your husband," said he, leaping into his shabby car, "and if I wait till he gets here, I'll be weak-minded enough to stay to lunch."

WHEN Martin came into the house, Lucinda was in the kitchen, having leaped ahead of him to dish out the stew and meet him in the dining-room with his luncheon. But as she leaned over the oil-stove and heard the old boards squeaking with his footsteps, she had an intimation of trouble. Something had happened to him. He was fifteen minutes late; his walk sounded peculiar.

"Martin!" she called, pausing with a half-filled dish.

"Yes, honey!" His voice was muffled. Why didn't he come to the kitchen and kiss her, as he always did when she was late with lunch?

"What's the matter, dear?" She sprang into the dining-room to find him seated at the table, his face a blank. Without a word she went over and lifted his chin.

"You've got to tell me!" she whispered. "What have they done to you?"

"I'll tell you what they've done to me, Cinders," he said solemnly, and her heart fluttered. "They've made me cashier of their old bank."

"Martin," she replied quietly, "you're not fooling me or anything?"

"I can't believe it myself." He folded his arms melodramatically. "But behold the Slave of the Golden Key, Lord of the Exchequer and Watchdog of the Treasury!"

Then her arms went around his neck, and she held tight, praying that she wouldn't be a weak fool and cry. She felt a little triumph too, because she had advised him to keep on with Mr. Rodney. She had done the right thing. She wanted to read his thoughts. Was he glad or merely acting? At least they would have the money they so keenly needed. She was sure he was glad. . . . With her cheek laid against his rough chin, her heart on his, she seemed to hear a cry of joy. You couldn't keep a man like Martin down! He was proving himself.

"Aren't you glad, Cinders?" she heard him whispering.

"Are you, Martin?" was all she could say.

"How could I help being? We're getting ahead." Even then his tone was not all satisfying.

He pulled her down on his knee, where he held her like a child, petting her, stroking her hair.

"You're tired, Cinders," he said at last. "You've had a mighty hard year."

"I've adored it!" She sat up and regarded him with worshiping eyes. "It's what I want, what I've always wanted. It's perfect, Martin. And to think—we're succeeding—you're being promoted—"

"Uncle Gail's taken a great shine to me all of a sudden," he exulted.

"I can't possibly see why," she teased, and

pulled his wavy hair. "But just what happened, old nuisance?"

"Well, you see Rodney Taylor's his nephew, and he's been cashier ever since the bank started. This is all Masonic stuff, Cinders. But this spring Uncle Gail woke up and began to wonder how a cashier on seventy-five a week could afford to build a hundred-thousand-dollar house. Anyhow, Rod walked out yesterday. They call it a vacation."

"Did the bank lose a lot of money?" asked Lucinda quickly, not fearing for the bank but for Martin.

"Not with Uncle Gail on the job! He's foreclosed on Rod's new house. It's a grand stroke of business for the bank."

"And a better stroke to get such a fine cashier," she informed him.

"It hits me like a thunderbolt. I thought it would go to Lester Sage. He's been in the Corn Exchange in New York. But the Board of Directors held a meeting last night and stayed up till nearly ten o'clock, like regular devils. Then they adjourned, all tired out, and met again this morning. It was a deadlock between Lester Sage and me."

"Who decided it?"

"Jerry Malone and his brother Tim. They're going my bond."

"Bless 'em both!" Her eyes misted, but cleared with a practical thought. "What are they paying you, Martin?"

"That's a good one too," he grinned. "Old Rodney rushed out of the directors' room with that kind air he has when he's trying to save a nickel. He offered me his congratulations and fifty a week. I took the congratulations and passed up the fifty—I happened to know that Rod had been drawing down seventy-five. Am I a business man? You'd have thought I had the presidency of the National City Bank in my pocket. I guess Uncle Gail would have called another meeting if Jerry Malone hadn't stepped in and said it was an outrage on the widows and orphans of the world. He said he'd change his deposits to the Harbor Bank. Then everybody shook hands and compromised on sixty."

"Sixty dollars a week?" breathed Lucinda incredulously.

"Yes. And before New Year's, Jerry and I are going to make an awful kick for seventy-five."

"WHOOPEE!" Lucinda sprang to her feet and dragged Martin after her so precipitately that his chair went over and the dishes on the old blue table rattled like castanets. "Whoopée!" she shrieked again, and with both his hands in hers went swinging round. Out of breath, she leaned panting against a door-frame.

"We can own the world!" she cried. "We can hire Joe Treat to come in on Mondays and spade around the rosebushes and mow the lawn for acres and acres."

"I think it would be better, Cinders, if you got a girl to help you round the house."

"Shucks!" was all he got for that. "But Mr. Hubble says we can have a pipeless heater put in for seventy-five dollars." Mr. Hubble was the plumber.

"Do you know, Cinders—" Martin's bright blue eyes were wandering through the window across the heavy foliage that shaded Saug Point. "It would be fine to own this property."

"It would be divine," she whispered.

"The bank holds a mortgage on it, and I know it could be bought for next to nothing. But, of course, that's a lot more than we've got now. We could get it for four thousand dollars, I feel pretty sure."

"I know Jerry would lend you something," she urged. "And now you'd better sit down, old man, and eat your lunch before it's stone cold."

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He ate absent-mindedly. "You know, Cinders, six per cent interest on four thousand would be two hundred and forty a year. With taxes that would be just about the rent we're paying now."

"Yes. And Mr. Rodney told me today that this place was a good buy."

"He's been making up to you, has he?" laughed Martin.

"He might have been. He stopped at the gate and actually tried to smile."

"You know," said Martin, "he put me through a moral examination."

"What did he ask you?" Her voice had grown sharp.

"Mainly about religion. He wanted to know if I was a Christian. I told him that I wasn't a Jew or a Mohammedan, if that was what he meant. Then he asked what religious denomination I belonged to, and I said Episcopalian. He got sort of red under the chin and said Episcopalianism smacked of popery. And that made Jerry mad, so I just faded away and let them fight it out."

"Well," mused Lucinda, eating mechanically, "it would be lovely if we could own this house. It sort of seems to belong to us, my dear."

"It does, honey," he declared, reaching over to pat her hand. "Hundreds of people must have lived and died here. But we're the only real ones."

"Couldn't we manage it somehow?" she begged.

"When I get that raise—but sixty a week's an awfully close margin to buy a house on."

"And I don't like you to work so hard," said she.

"I like it," he assured her. "I didn't think I would at first. It's like playing a game. It grows on you. Only, I've been worrying about you, Cinders."

"Why?"

"You know very well. Don't pretend. You aren't used to this sort of thing. You'll wear yourself out."

"Do I look worn out?"

Her beaming, sun-tinted face must have reassured him, for he sighed and said:

"There's nobody like you, that's all."

She leaned over him, caressing his shoulders for an instant, then asked softly:

"Martin, do you know something else?"

"What, dear?"

"I've got nearly ninety dollars left."

"Gee, you're wonderful!"

"And I was talking with Sid Fletcher. He wants to sell his old Ford—the one that ran into the gas-tank. He's patched it up, and he'll take fifty dollars for it."

"Will it run?"

"It did yesterday. I ran it myself to the Harbor and back. Do you think we could afford it?"

"Well, I guess we can," laughed the new-made cashier of the Saug Point National Bank.

Then it was that Lucinda began to cry, for the first time since the breakfast at Childs'. Although he took her in his arms and coaxed her and asked her why, she was quite unable to tell him. Their fortunes were beginning to rise. They could buy a secondhand Ford.

Chapter Thirty-four

THEY called their bargain Ford the Baby Elephant because of its dusty coloring, its frightened trumpeting and the way its curly front fenders stuck out like great loose ears. The morning after Martin's promotion Lucinda went early to Sid Fletcher, paid the money in cash and shot away at the risk of her own life and others'. In a region of Long Island where policemen are scarce and indifferent, and a speeder is safe from arrest, if from nothing else,

she could be mad for an hour or two in the frenzy of new possession. "You can make it, darling," she whispered to the Baby Elephant as it panted and sneezed and threatened to faint on the Harbor Hill. Halfway up it failed, and in an inspired attempt to turn it around and coast down again, she clogged the entire roadway, to the disgust of a bloated red oil-truck which shrieked a bullying insult and stopped on the grade. The driver had come down with a wha'cha-think-y-are, but being himself young, softened at Lucinda's look. He pushed the car out of his way and even wasted a little of the Standard Oil's time to show her the relative merits of first and second speeds.

AROUND and around she raced with the enthusiasm of a young hound released from its chain. With a beginner's luck she grazed everything and bumped nothing. She was swollen with pride when she found she could stop relatively close to the curb in Bird Harbor and buy vegetables independently, forcefully, at G. Fontello's store. Then on her way home she took the shore road, filling her lungs with the quaint breath of low tide, filling her eye with the sight of skeleton hulks, rotting in the ooze, of bare-legged clam-diggers strutting like cranes through the muck, of sheer white yachts, their brasswork shining, their pennants lazily ad flutter as they lay waiting in the stream.

She met death at every turn, passed it and went ecstatically on. Around one swift curve she came into the East Spring Road, and seeing a sign "Fresh Eggs," recalled her household duties with an abruptness that stalled her engine in the middle of the highway. Up the lawny knoll she could see a handsome white farmhouse. It was a picture of rural order; the honeysuckle on its trellis seemed to have been dusted with a damp cloth. The walks, the drives, were precisely made of Shoreham pebbles. Two children in khaki were playing noisily in a patent swing. To the rear loomed opulent red barns with white trimmings; geese marched by in gawky single file; dozens of white Leghorn hens dotted the lawn like animated popcorn.

She went up a side path, knocked at the kitchen door, and some one who had been singing plaintively, tunelessly, came out to meet her. She was a tall, handsome woman in a bungalow apron and a headdress roughly resembling a boudoir cap: the woman who called herself Mrs. Marcken.

"Good morning, Mrs. Marcken," began Lucinda cheerfully, though a little self-consciously.

"Good morning." There was a question in the big woman's brown eyes, but no attempt at friendliness—suspicion, rather, and a desire that the two should remain as they were, separated by the screen door.

"I see you have eggs for sale."

"Yes. We have them."

"Could I get two dozen, Mrs. Marcken?"

"I guess so." The woman who called herself Mrs. Marcken turned in her felt slippers and shuffled back across the oil-cloth. She hadn't asked Lucinda to come in and sit down, after the neighborly fashion of farm-wives. She had merely slipped away into a pantry and left her caller standing outside. Around the doorstone was such a garden as Lucinda envied: pansies, candytuft, sweet alyssum. A dozen ducklings, close-packed in some tiny naval maneuver, moved machinelike across a glassy pond down the glen. . . . It must be fine, Lucinda thought, to be mistress of such a place, so remote, so fertile, so beautifully cared for. It was like living in your own castle with the drawbridge up, the world forgotten. Mrs. Marcken should be a very happy woman. . . . Then Lucinda remembered the look in her eyes.

The silent woman came back with the eggs

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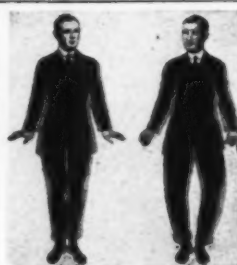
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in a flimsy fruit-basket, and Lucinda expanded to say:

"You have a lovely farm here, Mrs. Marcken."

"Yes. It is pretty." She showed the ghost of a smile as her melancholy eyes strayed across the barnyard.

"Do you have only white Leghorns?" This as a feeble preliminary to a hundred impertinent questions.

"Yes—all white Leghorns." Mrs. Marcken gazed starkly.

"Well, good morning, Mrs. Marcken."

"Good morning."

"What makes you look that way?" Lucinda would have asked. "Didn't you find him worth it? Why do you stay together, then? Is there something that chains you still, that you can't go? Or do you want to go? Are you afraid of me? Why? Because you think I'm respectable?"

LUCINDA carried these questions, and more like them, with her all day; and that night when she drove to the bank to bring Martin home,—a most unnecessary proceeding, since it was a fine day and the walk was less than a city block,—she was still thinking about the woman who called herself Mrs. Marcken. Martin came out and slammed the big oak door with an authoritative air. He kissed her in view of the State Road, patted the Baby Elephant on one of its floppy ears, and asked cheerfully:

"How's she running?"

"Just perfectly," glowed Lucinda.

"Figuratively speaking," grinned Martin.

"It seems to me I see a new crack in the windshield, and one of the rear tires is flat."

"Oh," said Lucinda absently. "Sid told me this morning that it needed a little air. I just forgot all about it. I've been in such a trance, Martin."

"Some of these days, if we don't both break our necks, we'll be trading this old can for a new one. But, Cinders, you've got to snap out of that trance. Uncle Gail's asked us to dinner."

"When?"—with a thrill of excitement.

"Tonight."

This was progress. Only once, when Dr. Corless had taken her roundabout to Bird Harbor, had she set eyes on the Rodney house.

"Uncle Gail calls it supper," explained Martin, "and he says six-thirty sharp. When Uncle Gail says something sharp, it's got a point on it like a needle. It's going to be an awful party, Cinders. But we've got to suffer to be great."

He took the wheel, still theorizing above the clatter: "We're going into the land of wonders. The Rodneys are a partially extinct anthropoid species. One of the money-changers in the temple. Pious. I wonder if there isn't some relation between prayer and usury? Cashing checks is bound to make you sanctimonious."

AT twenty minutes past six they were again in the Baby Elephant, puffing desperately toward Bird Harbor. Martin at the wheel easily negotiated the hill which had baffled Lucinda in the morning. It gave her a serene pleasure. He had a manual aptness at odds with his theoretical mind. Or because of his theorizing, perhaps, he lent himself to the practice of motoring as earnestly as to the study of banking.

They turned in at a pebbly drive fiercely marked out with concrete blocks; a concrete house, some two and a half stories high, stood at the very top of a tall round knoll, bare of shrubs, trees or flowers and covered monotonously with lawn. It was eminent for fivescrrens and for awnings with a hard green stripe, and for a mosquito-proof porch painted a green that defied the green of the lawn and the green of the awnings.

"It looks like a funny square hat on the top of a clown with green hair," tittered Lucinda.

"Maybe we'd better not mention that to the boss," said Martin, and an instant later they were in the mosquito-proof porch, shaking hands solemnly with Mr. Gail Rodney. He bade them sit in green wicker chairs beside a green wicker table. Apparently he had a special sacerdotal air for social occasions. His thin lips and stubby gray mustache moved cautiously as he expounded upon the peculiarities of the weather. Mr. Rodney shouldn't wonder if we'd have a dry spell coming along about now. Then we'd have to economize on city water, which was hard on the lawns. Martin and Lucinda, almost in a breath, congratulated Mr. Rodney on his lawn, and this pleased him. He boasted that he liked things neat; Mrs. Rodney liked trees, but he thought they were a nuisance.

He looked alternately at his watch and the front door. Presently a thin woman, a head taller than the little banker, came timidly out. Her slender nose, low forehead and large, mild eyes reminded Lucinda of some odd dog—a greyhound. Without rising from his chair, Uncle Gail fixed her coldly and began:

"Josie, it's twenty-five minutes of seven."

"I'm awful sorry supper's late." She said this cringingly, as though she would come forward and lick her master's hand. "But Mr. Gable was up this afternoon to fix the oil-stove."

"Where's Winnie?" asked Mr. Rodney, fixing his woman with the still eyes of a hypnotist.

"Oh—ah. I think she's down now, Mr. Rodney."

"What's she doin'? Takin' a bath?"

"No, but—"

"SUPPER'S ready!" A large, sweating woman with rolled-up sleeves and straggling hair shouted this through the screen like a defiance.

"Well, I think it's about time," mumbled Uncle Gail, and led them through a tight little parlor whose sleek department-store mahogany, curly gilt picture-frames and linoleum rug managed to suggest a Victorian era which, superficially, they in no wise resembled. Everything was brilliantly new and the pine floors were slippery with yellow varnish.

The dining-room had oak woodwork and a maple-leaf wallpaper. There was an angry lithograph of Christ driving the money-changers from the temple; the table and chairs were of a mongrel Mission design; five places were marked by cooling plates of red soup.

"We won't set down, if you please," mumbled Mr. Rodney, "until everybody's here. Mrs. Platt,"—this to the loosely knit house-worker who appeared at the door with a saucer of pickles,—"tell Winnie that supper's ready."

"Winn-eel!" This from Mrs. Platt, one step outside the door. "Come right down to sup-pur!"

Footsteps moved on the floor above, then came tating down the stairway, and a young girl in pink scuttled into the room. Her hair was done in round knobs over the ears. She would have been pretty save that her face, like her father's, was a trifle too long, and her eyes, like his, too narrow. Her cheeks were aflame with rouge, artlessly daubed on.

"Well," said Mr. Rodney when she had sidled into her chair without being introduced, "I suppose you've took all this time, paintin' yourself up like a clown."

"She's goin' to choir-practice," intervened her mother.

"She aint if I can help it—not with all that paint and powder on her face."

Winnie sat perfectly stolid, small eyes with blackened lashes fixed on her plate.

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"But, Mr. Rodney—" began Mrs. Rodney's plaintive voice.

"Be still, can't you?" he snarled.

Silence fell across the board. Mrs. Rodney had already drooped her head. Mr. Rodney was about to ask the blessing.

Pitching his voice to a singsong, quite unnatural to his native speech, he invoked God's grace for all he knew.

He mentioned the President of the United States by name, "and the good men laboring with him in the cause of right and justice." He mentioned the Democratic governor of New York, who, he hoped, could be brought to see the light. He mentioned his town and his neighbors, beseeching divine intervention in behalf of the crops. Then, to Lucinda's disturbed surprise, he got around to her own special case: "O Lord, bless this young couple who have come into our midst to do Thy good work in the holy bonds of wedlock ordained by Thee. And let them walk in the light of Thy righteousness and peace. . . ."

"Pass the bread, Mother," said Uncle Gail complacently, right on the end of his prayer. And when he had helped himself to two slices, he demanded: "Good land, haven't we got anythin' better'n this whole-wheat stuff? Why don't Mrs. Platt bake any more biscuits?"

"She's been puttin' up rosberries all this week," faltered Mrs. Rodney.

"Foolishness!" he grunted. The pretty, painted Winnie went on spooning soup. She might not have been there, save for a feeling of unease and sympathy which she cast into Lucinda's heart. Why didn't she run away? What was it that chained her to this mongrel Mission table, to be publicly abused? The roast mutton and pan-baked potatoes had come on, and Mr. Rodney was saying to Martin:

"That farmer, Marcken, didn't come in today, did he?"

"No, Mr. Rodney."

"Well, he'll be in pretty soon. Bound to be. He's got an option on the Fielding tract, running west of him, and he's after money. When he comes, just tell him I say no."

"Isn't he good for it?" asked Martin.

"Best in the world, I guess." Uncle Gail's mouth tightened to a scar. "But he don't get a cent out o' me. If the Harbor Bank wants to lend money to a man and a woman livin' in sin, it's their business, not mine. See what I mean, don't you?"

"Well," began Martin, and Lucinda's heart stood still, "just what do you mean by 'living in sin'?"

"That's plain enough!" snapped the banker.

"You mean they steal or set fire to houses?"

"If you don't know about the Marckens, this is no place to talk about it. Pass the chow-chow, Mother." Mr. Rodney's long chin hardened.

"Marcken's farm may be doin' pretty good this year with the help of the Jews and the Catholics—well, yes, and the Episcopalians is pretty near as bad, too. They aint quite so bad; at least they're Protestants, and that's somethin'. But I aint got much room for Dr. Corless, smokin' segars, chummin' with a lot of Bolshevs and preachin' what-not from the pulpit. The old-fashioned gospel's good enough for me. . . . Mother, I should think you'd have that roast set on the table where folks can get at it."

UNTIL the end of the meal Lucinda felt that she too was immersed in that inferiority which covered the Rodney women. Mrs. Rodney spoke in a half-whisper now and then, suggesting dainties; Winnie ate silently, her painted face expressionless, while her father unburdened himself of that mixture of financial shrewdness and social bigotry which had raised him to his small eminence. When Mrs. Platt brought large pressed-glass saucers of floating island, Winnie rose and, sans apology, started for the door.

"Where you goin' now?" called her father. "Choir-practice." It was said in a low, pretty voice—the first words Lucinda had heard her speak.

A distant screen door, slamming, proclaimed insurgency.

"What do you let her act that way for, Mother?" asked Uncle Gail savagely, turning to his wife.

"She was in a hurry, I guess, Mr. Rodney," replied his slave.

"They're all in a hurry," he said, and Lucinda saw a mark of tragedy in his narrow face; later she was to learn that Winnie was the youngest of five children who, except for one who had become a missionary, had according to Bird Harbor standards, "gone wrong."

They settled themselves in a row on the green porch chairs, enjoying a long silence while Uncle Gail picked his twisted yellow teeth; and as if in conformity with the standard which her husband set, Mrs. Rodney also picked. Because it is only polite to follow one's host's example, Lucinda laid the wooden splinter against her teeth and looked slyly around at Martin; he was chewing his.

The long July evening had taken on the white softness which precedes twilight, and in the unsocial silence Lucinda gazed across the bleak lawn till her eyes met a jungle of locusts crowning the other hill, just beyond the deep cut where the State Road ran.

Gail Rodney had pushed the trees as far away from him as his acres would allow. He had created a concrete house with its back deliberately turned on the Inlet and the Harbor, with their gracious, pregnant waters. He was the most successful man in his community—and his daughter had rouged her cheeks to go to choir-practice.

"I think maybe we'd better be going," she said at last, since Uncle Gail showed no intention of breaking his reverie.

"Oh, what's your hurry?" fawned Mrs. Rodney.

"Set still," commanded Uncle Gail. "Now, look here, Cole. What's the chances of your stayin' on in the bank?"

"I should like to very much, sir," replied Martin, undoubtedly as nervous as Lucinda.

"We love it here," broke in Lucinda, to be downed by one of Uncle Gail's grunts.

"Well, there's no reason why you shouldn't stay. What I want in my bank's loyalty. And stability. And respectability. And if you stay, you've got to have a place to live in, hey? How do you like that little barn you're in now?"

"Oh, we're crazy about it," admitted Martin.

"We certainly are!" cried Lucinda.

"Well," said Uncle Gail around the edge of his toothpick, "I guess you're 'bout the only folks round here that thinks that way. There's a lot got to be done onto it. D'you know the bank holds a mortgage on that prop?"

"Martin was saying—" began Lucinda, and was still.

"Martin hasn't got any business sayin' too much, even to his wife," threatened Uncle Gail.

In Martin's impassive face she could read a rebuke, but relief came promptly in Rodney's next remark.

"If you young folks want to take over that mortgage,—it's four thousand dollars,—I guess it might be arranged." The two young persons sat up, still and listening. "I said it *might* be arranged." Uncle Gail fastened his teeth more firmly on his wooden splinter.

IT was nearly ten o'clock when they went home, and as they chugged down the faultless, sterile drive, Lucinda looked up at the stars, marking red Mars and delicate Jupiter and diamond Venus, flaming from south to west in the triangle of the planets. They were like the earth, she thought, living and warm and full of desire. And all living things wanted the same sweet rewards. How many obtained them?

(The conclusion of Mr. Irwin's much-discussed story of modern marriage will appear in the next, the January, issue.)

PROVEN PUDDING

(Continued from page 43)

the second-act opening. Bee stood by the side-wall. This was Friday night. Two more performances, and she'd be out. Rather melancholy business. Leaving a show you'd thrown yourself into whole-heartedly was bound to be so. Only twice more the hurried dressing, the hasty turn at the make-up table, the crowded stage, the laughter and applause of the people out front, the stir and lift of the music—they'd be playing in a minute—the swing of dance and song. She hummed absently:

Dance a cachucha, fandango, bolero,
Xeres we'll drink—Manzanilla, Montero—

Soon they'd be romping through that gayest of dance numbers. She'd laugh, of course, as she swung into the glide and stamp of the Spanish step. You had to laugh.

She leaned against the gondola of the first act, sniffing the air that was heavy with

powder and make-up, with oil-soaked wood and paint on old canvas. Back-stage! There is no other such smell in the world. To those who love the theater, it is a romantic essence. Bee felt it sensitively. It touched with poignancy her practical sense of loss. Supposing she failed to pick up some other small job, what then? Summer stock, perhaps. But even there they demanded experience. You couldn't break in anywhere without experience, and you couldn't get it until you had broken in. Well— She met that dilemma with a cool shrug. You simply kept your nerve and fought for openings. Others, thousands of them, had broken through. That was all right. If the going became too rough, there were plenty of temporary jobs to turn to about the Village. Tea-rooms—little shops. It wouldn't be the first time she'd worn an apron. She knew perfectly the value of her bright personality. You couldn't starve her.

Fred had said he'd be waiting. He meant it. A healthy anger warmed her breast. He would never know that he had touched her precisely to the quick. The men always came down to that, to capturing you through that lurking emotional weakness. Fred had stated, in his primitive way, the issue—the old human issue. He was simply the man out to capture his woman. It was no good trying to reason with him. He'd never know what she meant. He'd never catch the faintest glimmer of her independent spirit, or sense the reality of her faith. He simply couldn't understand that women were people. Not a chance. And so she settled it that he was finally out of her life. War, eh? They'd see about that! He was a closed book; and that being so, the fair, clean thing was to snap him shut and keep him shut. Certainly she couldn't have him stirring her up. That spelled waste energies, and she had none to spare. She

had liked him. At moments she'd feel sorry for him. But that would be about all.

A pleasant baritone floated down the stairway. It would be Leslie Perkins, humming scales. Yes, here he was, running down, as *Giuseppe*, the comic crown askew on his handsome head. She beckoned.

"Les, I need a little protection tonight. Will you walk over with me?"

SLOWLY his eyes turned down to her. His expression was odd; the familiar easy smile didn't appear. Slowly, soberly, he inclined his head. "Certainly, Bee. I'll be glad to. I'll be waiting here at the stage door. Excuse me now. I'm due on the scene."

Dignity! She wondered. It couldn't be that he was offended with her small self. Come to think of it, Lou had mentioned some little rub or other.

She heard the quick rapping of the conductor's baton. The orchestra burst into the act introduction. Then came the rustle and scrape of the ascending curtain, the laughter out front, and the fresh voices of the male chorus:

"Of happiness the very pith
In Barataria you may see;
A monarchy that's tampered with
Republican equality."

And then, a moment or so later, Leslie's firm ringing voice:

"Rising early in the morning,
We proceed to light our fire—"

Only twice more. There were tears in her eyes. She stamped impatiently, and moved over to the scene entrance. No sense in being a sentimental fool. The girls were crowding down the stairs and grouping by the entrance. Pretty soon she'd be on there, working. . . .

At eleven, when she came running down from the dressing-room, Leslie was waiting just inside the stage door. And just outside would be Fred. These men! She'd like to cheer Les up a bit. He was so glum and so desperately civil. She slipped a hand through his arm and dragged him out into the passageway.

Fred had a taxi at the curb. He was standing by it, watching, very alert. He stepped forward with a quick grin, lifted his hat. She nodded, and drew Leslie by.

"You're coming along with me, aren't you, Bee?"

She shook her head with a decisive little snap. "No, thanks, Fred; I'm going home."

"But—"

That was as far as he got. She marched off. To Leslie she explained as they crossed the Square: "Fred and I've had a bit of a scene. I won't pretend I like it—or him." She glanced up at him. Apparently he hadn't heard. He was staring up over the park at the houses in Grove Street. She had rather counted on his good humor. You did lean on that quality in Les. He must be, she reflected, in a dreadful mood to keep as still as this. And at the steps he simply released her arm and mumbled a good-night.

"Aren't you coming up, Les?"

HE looked down at her. His head moved in the negative. He seemed almost comically like a small boy on the point of bursting into tears. She nearly broke out laughing. He drew in his breath sharply—turned away, swung back. "I know Lou thinks I'm turning Victorian, Bee. But I'm not. Honestly, I'm not." His manner indicated dogged patience in the face of deep injury. "But Lou isn't playing the game."

"Oh, now, Les—"

"I don't mean that, exactly, of course." Clearly he meant just that, excitedly that. "But here's the trouble: Lou can't help taking care of folks. She can't, Bee! And that's all right up to a certain point—as

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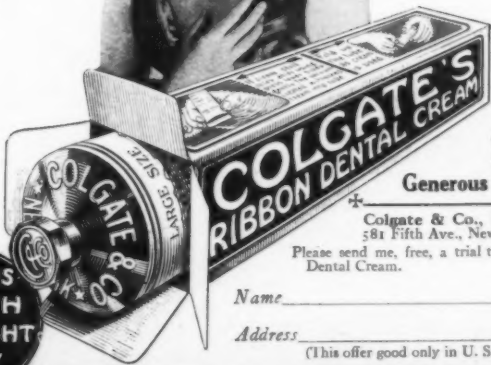
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long as they understand it. But when she picks up a poor fish like Wilbur and brings him right in to—to sleep here—and be fussed over—and—" A ranting note was creeping into his voice. The man evidently was boiling inside.

"What perfect nonsense!" said she. "But is it? Is it? I've been thinking back. I can see a few things. I'm waking up to them. Would she ever have taken up with me if I hadn't been out of a job and sick? There we were, right in the same house. She nursed me. And then we fell in love. She couldn't help taking care of me. You know. You were right there. You saw it all. It was her big heart, and that damn' strength of hers. And then—well, now it's—"

"Are you trying to tell me that Lou is likely to fall in love with Wilbur?" Bee laughed shortly.

"All I know, is that—"

"Lou," she broke in, "is the squarest girl that ever walked on two feet."

"Then why won't she marry me? Now, why won't she?"

"She'll never marry anybody, Les. You know that. Lou must have her own life." Bee had mounted the steps and was unlocking the door. She hadn't much patience to give this childish boy. Not much. "But you have her love. Of course, if you must have the earth and the moon too, why, I'm afraid nobody can advise you very successfully. You won't come up?"

"Oh, no! No, I can't! Look here, she was to have dinner with me tonight. She didn't turn up. No word. Couldn't get an answer over the phone. I came over here and couldn't find anybody in the apartment. I suppose you'll say Wilbur had nothing to do with that!" His voice broke. "It's the first time she has ever—"

"Oh, now, really, there's simply some mistake! Try to be sensible, Les. For heaven's sake, come up and talk to her! You play the game, yourself."

"No. Not after— No."

"Good night, then, Les. Thanks for bringing me over."

She went straight in, shut the door, and climbed the three flights of stairs, not running now.

Chapter Eight

LOU was stretched out in the wicker chair reading a letter.

"Hello!" said Bee, getting out of her coat and hat and hanging them up. "Rather a serious atmosphere, I should say. Anything the matter? Where's everybody?"

"I haven't seen Delia since morning. And Wilbur's up in the fourth floor back, if he hasn't gone out and drowned himself."

"Contemplating suicide, is he?" Bee knocked a cigarette against her thumbnail and lit it.

"He mentioned it as a possibility." "Fred looks at the thing differently. He appears to be playing a little with the idea of killing me. But what's Wilbur doing upstairs?"

"Oh, it was getting a little—well, a little thick here."

Something or other had been going on. But Bee wouldn't ask what. "Well," she remarked, "Delia can have the couch now."

"Yes, that thought rather appealed to me. I nearly froze last night. You're a good egg, Bee, but you do roll yourself up in all the bedclothes there are."

"At that, if Delia doesn't come in pretty soon, I'll have to sleep out here myself. We'd never hear the buzzer in the bedroom. That child is certainly making an evening of it."

Lou was looking down again thoughtfully at her letter.

"Bad news?" asked Bee.

"Well—yes. Pretty bad."

"Your folks?"

"No. Leslie. Special delivery."

"Oh!"

"It's nerves. A brainstorm. You see, I forgot a dinner engagement."

"Yes, I know, Lou. He walked over with me just now. But he wouldn't come up."

"Makes me feel like the devil. He thinks I've been shabby. And I haven't."

"Poor Les! He's pretty upset."

"I've been wrestling with an impulse to call him up and explain. But,"—Lou pursed her lips—"how can I explain that I dined with Wilbur when that's the very possibility he's so worked up about!"

"He is in quite a state."

"It's hard to know what to—" Lou's eyes were brimming. "Oh, the devil, Bee! The best I can do for Les is to hurt him. I'm always hurting him. I don't like it. I don't like the way he's making an issue of this marriage business. I can't marry him. How could I?"

There was an interruption at this point. The buzzer sounded. Delia came upstairs, followed by a boy with a box four feet long. She said she'd found him in the front entry lighting matches in an effort to find Bee's name among the mail-boxes. Delia carried a book hugged tightly under one arm. Her color was high, her eyes glowing. She made some hesitant remark or other about fearing she'd kept them up, and then slipped away to prepare for bed. She was in and out after that, listening to what was said, but offering no comment of her own.

BEE opened the box and discovered a long moist heap of American beauties. For a moment she stood looking down at them. Then, firmly, she lifted them out one by one, broke up the stems, pulled the fragrant buds apart, throwing all in the box. And she telephoned for a messenger-boy.

"What you and Les went in for"—Bee was tearing the buds apart, a vehement little person now—"was trial marriage. It's the only decent way to go about it, anyway. The only way you can possibly find each other out." (A thorn stuck her thumb, and she interrupted herself with an, "Ouch!") "How on earth can you promise to love a person! How can you possibly commit yourself beyond undertaking to learn whether you love! Whatever love is! I'm about ready to define it as an inflammation of the ego. In men, at least." She pressed the broken flowers into the box with her foot, put the cover on, and looked around for the wrapping-paper. "And the worst of it is, once the man has got you safely chained, he shuts you up in a house, fills your life with children and household clutter, and holds himself free to roam and prance. There's the male of it! Not for me! Not for me!"

Lou, who had only half listened, now awoke to the nature of her friend's activity. "Bee, what on earth are you up to?"

Bee, the parcel tied, sat back on her heels and surveyed her handiwork. "Fred declared war, tonight."

"War?"

"The old sex war. These roses appear to be the opening gun. And I'm firing 'em straight back."

"Was he pretty bad?"

"Making every allowance, yes. But never mind that. I can handle him. I know what I'm after, and it's not Fred. Here's what I'm coming round to. You simply can't get anywhere if you let the men keep fussing you up emotionally. At least, I can't."

"I wonder if any girl can," mused Lou.

"Take last night. I had a few drinks, and the first thing I knew, there I was on the sofa, cuddling up to Jimmy West. Can you beat it?" Bee was on her feet, and at this expressive bit of slang she threw out her slender arms. "I have nothing to say to Jimmy. He's got less to say to me. And yet— Oh, Lord!" She slammed the box on



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Chapter Nine

the table and took to walking the floor. "If it really touches something deep in you to let your emotions ride, if it inspires you, if it's what you need—I say go after it. Take it. Heaven knows, I've got a boundless respect for honest passion. But it doesn't fire me, and I don't want it. Not at the present stage of my particular little human comedy. So far as I can see, there's just one healthy force in the human critter, and that's self-interest. Frank, honest self-interest. If everybody'd look out for himself, and only for himself, there'd be a lot fewer people needing help in this world."

DELIA stood in the doorway during this speech, slowly tying the sash of her kimono. This was the fiery Bee of their college days. The hint of a smile hovered about her mouth, as her eyes followed the determined little figure about the room. Then she went back into the bedroom and stood for a time by the dresser, gazing in a dreamy way at the exquisitely written inscription on the fly-leaf of her book. It was the sort of hand she had heard her father describe as "copper plate," fine, clearly legible, the letters perfectly formed and uniform in size. He had written a verse, freshly her own, created for her. The difficulty—standing there, staring at it—was to believe that he had. The confusing fact—it was true!—seemed to sound in her naively responsive spirit like a dimly heard chord of music. She was trembling as she laid the book down and with excited quick fingers untied her sash.

In the living-room Bee was sputtering on: "Take Les, Lou. Set him off and look him over honestly. He's sunk in self-pity. You can't give in to that; perhaps that's brutal, but—"

Lou slowly inclined her head in agreement. "Of course, an affair like ours has a code, clear enough. If either fails to live up to it—"

"Or take Wilbur's mother. Capitalizing mother love. Erecting it into a fine monstrosity. Letting it run into vicious self-indulgence. There's a fine case! You saw it. Let her stand on her own feet or go down. That's the healthy thing. When you come down to it, what right has a woman like that to live? The fact that twenty-six years ago she produced Wilbur doesn't seem quite enough."

Lou went over to the mantel, and deliberately burned Leslie's letter in the old-fashioned grate. "I can't answer it," she said.

Bee stood like a somewhat excited boy, feet apart, head back, emphasizing her points with little stabs of a cigarette.

"I'll admit I've had something of an evening, Lou. I've been pretty thoroughly stirred up. But it has set me thinking. All this damn' male business! It does seem to have a place."

"Oh, it has a place," observed Lou. She was wondering how much Bee really knew about it. All this theorizing—

"But it's certain that there can be no civilization so long as it's left to the men—their laws, their desires, their muscular superiority."

"We've got the vote," said Lou, "and it doesn't seem to make much difference."

"It calls for more than the vote, Lou. Woman has love to give. Very well, she should control the situation. We'll grant that marriage is impossible under present conditions. Until laws and customs change, until men come around to something faintly suggesting a civilized state of mind! And the conditions are changing. Woman is the one who bestows happiness. Very well, let her bestow it coolly, with her eyes open. Let her bargain. It's no battle of Republicans and Democrats. It's the battle of woman and man that's been thousands of years in the making. The vote's all right, but I'm for a real Woman's Party."

"It may take a little time to work out,"

said Lou. "What are you going to do with yourself in the meantime?"

"At least I can act on principle, can't I? Isn't it something to have a standard and hold to it? I want marry for a living. I want go into it as a sanctuary from my own emotions. As a cover. That's what millions of girls do now, of course. When I find there's a man I simply can't get along without, I shall tell him so. As you've done."

Lou watched her, moodily wondering just what had swung Bee around to this subject of marriage. Oh—Fred! The poor girl must have had a rather tempestuous evening of it. Considering this, and rather vaguely following the argument, Lou remarked:

"There's one little difficulty—a piece that just won't seem to fit into the puzzle: children."

"The old emphasis on legitimacy, you mean?"

Lou inclined her head.

"That's changing. It's changing fast, Lou."

"I'm not so sure."

"But it is! There's so much intelligent thought loose in the world. After whole ages of bigotry! The next ten years are bound to show big strides."

"I notice a few odd little facts in the papers, though. The fundamentalists seem to keep pretty well occupied. There's prohibition, and censorship. A dozen kinds of that. And the big endowments of the manufacturers are likely to keep the colleges pretty safe for oligarchy. They're fighting modern bathing-suits and bobbed hair. The crusade against the cigarette is growing, I understand. All the old stuff—money, prurience, fear of all thinking, stand-pat religion—funny how those rotten old mental habits seem always to go together. Free speech is gone, of course. Really gone."

"Oh, but—"

"Wait a minute! I'm just thinking this out a little. I'm beginning to wonder if we don't fool ourselves, some, down here in the Village. There aren't so many of us, and there are millions of the others—people that fight thought. I'm not sure we understand them as deeply as we think. That conservative sort of thing, ugly as it looks to us, seems to be rooted in some instinct, something 'deep in the race.' ("You talk like Fred, you old Bourbon!" Bee put in.) "I see it in the business. Do you know why those dear fundamentalists are putting up such a fight on evolution? Because they hate the very idea of progress. Of development, even. They may burn some of us at the stake yet. And yet, it's perfectly possible that they have as much value in the great scheme of things as we have. How can we know? After all, who are we? Oh, I guess I'm pretty let down. I've had nothing but scenes all day. Wilbur's mother came into the office—"

"Oh, that!"

LOU nodded, then turned with a start: "My word, Delia! All dressed again!"

There stood Delia, clothed clear to street coat and hat, very pretty and confused, laughing a little, though her eyes had an odd stare. "I—I forgot something," she said. "Something I—I meant to buy over at the drug-store. I'll just slip over there."

"Better take the house-key," said Lou. "It's right there on the nail by the door." She was off-handed enough about it; but when the door had closed and they could hear her light step on the stairs, the two girls looked at each other.

"Hm!" mused Lou. "Looks as if she's stepping a bit."

"She's fibbing, that one," said Bee. "If she does go to the drug-store, my guess is it'll be to telephone. However, that's up to her. She's of age. I'm all out for self-interest now."

THE messenger-boy had come and gone. "Rather expensive," Bee remarked ruefully, weighing in her hand what was left of her change. "But after all, the thing in war is to win. I only hope it wakes him up. When he looks at the mess in that box, he may stay awake awhile. You see, old dear, I've had a hell of a day and a worse evening. That's all that's the matter with me. And I'll admit that Fred stirred me. I told him he didn't, but he did. Made me mad. I don't want to be stirred. I can't stand it. I'm not a big nature like you. Oh, I'm not! I'm just a little single-tracker."

"I'm not big," said Lou gloomily. "Not so big as I may have thought. I've been stirred, too. The scenes I've been through today. And tonight. Gosh!"

"Oh—Wilbur's mother?"

"That began it. She came in this morning and plumped herself on Mr. Hargrove. He didn't know what it was all about, and passed her on to me." Lou dropped into the wicker chair by the window, stretched out her long legs, and smoked in sober thought. "Bee, there's pity in it. I hadn't thought of that."

"Maudlin pity."

"No, not just that. Be as cerebral and Shavian as you like, pity figures. There she sat in my office, a fat little woman with a bulgy forehead and bulgy eyeballs behind her spectacles. All religion and ignorance and primitive superstition and self. Guided by a selfishness so fierce and so dense that you couldn't penetrate it with even the simplest truth. But there she sat, a human being. I had taken her boy from her, and she knew it—or suspected it. He's talked a lot about me. She knows I've influenced him."

"You're not turning sentimentalist, Lou!"

"No. No, I don't think so. But sitting there, wondering how in the devil I could handle her—Oh, tears, of course. All that. He'd never been away from her a single night before. She'd actually made him sleep in the same room. I saw it a little differently. You see, you figure human problems out according to logical theory, and then a queer fact pops up and hits you in the face. I'd meddled. I began to wonder what right we have, any of us, to step into other people's lives—No, let me think this out, Bee. I'm pretty close to your argument now. That self-interest business. A human life is a pretty complicated thing, any way you look at it. Try butting in, no matter how wise you think you are, and you're pretty sure to find you've started something. Puzzling!"

"How on earth did you handle her?"

"It took hours. Awfully tricky. I didn't feel like lying. But I kept my head. Talked like the family doctor. A funny thing was that I realized, after a while, that I was cowering her a little. You see, she didn't know how to take me. She'd thought of me as a loose woman. And I wasn't. She couldn't help seeing that I had some dignity and standing there in the office. For once I was glad I hadn't bobbed my hair. Of course I couldn't tell her that I've been psyching Wilbur in my amateur way. She'd never get that. But I did try to make her see that the boy is on the edge of a breakdown, and that the one hope for him lies in a change of environment. I caught myself explaining that he has pretty nearly passed through the complex stage into a real neurosis."

"Did she understand that?"

"She did not. She asked who could take a mother's place by his side. She seemed rather bewildered. But she quieted down some. No idea of letting go, you understand. More as if she sensed I was touching her own weakness and had to cast

about for some fresh line of attack. I could see her mind groping around in its pitiful little circle. I kept patient and gentle, and that disarmed her for the moment. You never get anywhere with primitive people by antagonizing them. There wasn't an arrow in that old-fashioned quiver of hers she could reach me with. . . . Of course, she said a lot. Has a mother no rights at all? That stuff."

"She didn't give up?"

"Oh, no. It was curious. In her confused way she seemed to begin thinking it might be worth while to make friends with me. Confided in me about her ailments."

"Played for sympathy?"

"Of course. She pins a good deal of faith in a weak heart. I'm her only link, of course—unless she hires detectives. And I hardly think she'll do that."

"Hmm! She might come down here."

"She doesn't know where I live. And the telephone's in your name. Wilbur assures me he hasn't mentioned you. Oh, she'll steam up again. Do something. That sort has to. To the end she'll be guided by morbid self-indulgence. One thing that seemed to hold her was the suggestion that if she doesn't leave him alone for a while, he'll really crack, and then she'll lose her meal-ticket. A mind like that clings pretty close to money. And I'll have to confess I twisted it around to make it look as if her welfare was on my mind too."

"How'd you ever get rid of her?"

LOU chuckled, without mirth. "Pushed my buzzer, and had some of the girls bring in some work. We finally maneuvered her out. She went as far as the elevator, but hung around awhile, crying, and then came back to the outer office and just sat there. I had to go down on the fire-escape to the seventh floor to get out to lunch. Along in the early afternoon she wandered out. The girls watched her for me."

"She'll be back."

"Of course. Tomorrow. But I can keep Wilbur away from the office for a few days—until I work something out. He might finish up that picture of Delia for our *Style Journal*. It'll make a cover. Mr. Hargrove's decent about it, takes it as one of the little personal crises that come up now and then in the business. But what came after was worse. I found Wilbur in an awful state down here. Took him for a walk, and he broke down and cried. The two of them, crying!"

"I'm afraid Wilbur's just a mess."

"I finally got him to eat a little dinner. And then walked hours more. I'll confess I'm wrong. You see, he ended by throwing himself on me."

"Throwing himself?"

"He proposed marriage." (Bee murmured, "Good Lord!") "In a wild sort of a way. Simply clung to me. Tragically! It's plain enough that the woman's deepest fear is that he'll marry. He seems to feel it blindly as his only salvation. I had to tell him he was talking nonsense. I didn't care to have him sleeping here in that emotional state, so I woke up Mrs. Neststrom and got him that room upstairs. He asked if he could come for breakfast and I said no. Then I came in and found Leslie's special delivery, which made it clear that I couldn't even explain. It's hopeless there. And that ends the story of one bright day in March."

"It seems to me," observed Bee, "that this struggle lies between Wilbur and his mother. You can't let them twist it around into a battle between you and her, with him hiding behind your skirts."

"I know."

"If people can't keep up, how can you drag them through? If you want my ad-



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REFRESHING is the wholesome frankness among refined women of today on subjects of personal daintiness and hygiene. Not so long ago there were comparatively few who even discussed these vital questions, all-important as they are in their direct bearing upon womanly health and happiness.

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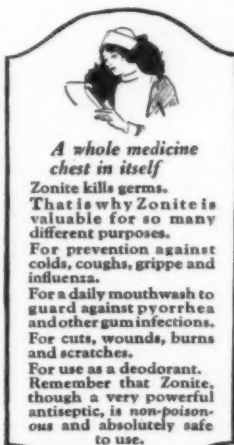
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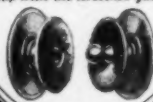
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The training, association and environment experienced during school years lay the foundations for success or failure in future life. The selection of the school best suited to develop each individual therefore should be a matter of thought and thorough investigation. This is especially true of boarding schools which prepare for college and for life, but it also holds good for schools of professional and special training.

The Red Book Magazine's Department of School Information has helped many hundreds of parents select the school for their boys and girls, also many young people who have appealed to us to find a school where they can procure just the right training for a chosen occupation. The same service is at your disposal.

We will gladly help you make a selection, if you do not find a school in pages 7-12 which seems to meet your needs. Our information is based on information obtained through personal visits to representative schools in all parts of the country. In order to be fully helpful we need data on the following: type of school you wish—college preparatory or general academic (in the case of a boy military or non-military), finishing, post-graduate, business, technical, secretarial, art, music, dramatic, dancing, etc.; location in which you wish school; approximate amount you plan to pay per year for board and tuition in the case of a boarding school, tuition only for schools of special training; exact age of prospective pupil, religion, and previous education in detail. Enclose a stamped return envelope and address:—

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THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

33 West 42nd Street, New York City

vice," ("I'd be glad of anybody's," said Lou,) "you'd better let 'em both stand on their own legs. Stand or fall alone. In the last analysis, aren't we all alone, every one of us?"

"That's what I'm coming around to." Lou rose and tossed her cigarette into the fireplace. "Yes, Bee, you're right. It's the only healthy course. Yes, I'll take him out to breakfast tomorrow, and tell him where he gets off."

"Somebody'll see you, and tell Les you were breakfasting together." Bee was grim.

"Can't help that. There's another thing I'm afraid I've got to—" Lou didn't finish this, except with a sigh. "But I've got to act. Clean it right up. I hate even to sleep on it."

Bee walked the floor. It occurred now to the more motherly Lou that the girl was strung up pretty high. Better get her to bed.

"I wish we could just clear out," cried Bee expressively, spreading her arms. "It's such a tangle! Such a miserable tangle!"

Chapter Ten

DELIA had come in, and was quietly undressing in the bedroom. Bee made up the couch for her. Then Lou left them together. They spoke only of surface things, casually—whether there were covers enough. Bee got a steamer rug from the closet.

Finally Delia said, hesitatingly: "You spoke about that girl, Bee. The one that was in love with—Arthur—Rockwell." She hesitated over his first name; and then, as if it were a rather hasty afterthought, added the surname. Her voice was low and uncertain. "I was wondering a little—you said she just drifted out. Doesn't anybody know what became of her?"

"Oh, I don't know." Bee was holding a pillow-slip in her teeth and crowding one of the sofa-cushions into it. "It seems to me I heard she worked in a tea-room for a while over on MacDougall Street. Probably she ended by going back to her home town. That's what the weak ones generally do."

"That was it, wasn't it! She was weak." "Oh, yes. It's no place here for that sort." Bee was just tired enough to put a little nervous force into that speech.

"No, of course not," said Delia. "The people that last in New York seem to have something—talent, courage—something. They have to. Something to give. You can't just take New York. You have to bring something to it if you're to hold your head up. It's no place for a timid little sentimentalist. I suppose what it comes down to is you've got to be a good sport."

"Yes, that's it, isn't it!" said Delia, with an odd, abrupt intensity. She was braiding her pale hair, and looking down at it as her slender fingers twisted the strands together. "That's just the modern quality—being a good sport. I've been wondering whether you were quite—well, quite fair in what you said about Arthur Rockwell."

"Perhaps not." "I mean whether he *could* have gone on with her after he'd found out she had nothing real to give him. Wouldn't it be honest, if that was the case—even better—not to go on? Mightn't it have been that his poet nature idealized her at first, and—"

"It might have." There was a dry note in Bee's voice. But Delia, standing with puckered brows, was too intent on her own thoughts to be aware of it.

"After all, Bee dear, he is a poet. He lives in a dream world. Wouldn't he *have* to be understood?" Naïvely she emphasized those words, much as a girl underscores in writing a letter.

"Oh, yes."

Delia, clad in a pretty suit of blue pajamas, looked down at them and smoothed the soft material with her hands, then suddenly giggled: "I've never worn pajamas before. I bought them for New York. Sort of a symbol of my— Well, I've never had what you could call a life of my own. You know."

"Yes, I know."

"You can't help thinking about that girl. Mightn't it be that neither of them was really to blame?"

"Oh, certainly."

"After all, what could he have done for her? I mean, if they'd tried it, and it didn't—well, just didn't work out. You could hardly insist that he marry her."

"Make an honest woman of her?" Bee laughed shortly, as she uttered the phrase which perhaps more than any other typified the popular Village ridicule of conventional morality.

"Yes, that's what I mean. That wouldn't be—well, modern, would it." This wasn't a question.

"It wouldn't be even intelligent. And now, dear, if you don't mind, I'm going to bed. I feel like a ruin without even ivy to grace it."

She was moving away when Delia spoke again: "Oh, Bee!"

"Yes?"

Lou had come along the hall and was moving about in the bedroom. Delia lowered her voice. "I meant to tell you, it has been wonderful of you to take me in like this, but—"

"That's nothing, dear. You're perfectly welcome. We love having you."

"But I couldn't just stay on. That wouldn't be right. The fact is, Bee, I've found a room."

"Oh, you have?"

"Yes. That is—" Delia lifted her head and looked straight at her friend. ("She actually wants to tell," thought Bee.) "He—Arthur Rockwell—found it. It's in the house next door to where he is."

BEE stood motionless. What could she say? What did this blundering, pathetic child imagine she could say? Briskly, then, she changed the subject. "Oh, Delia, I plumb forgot." Again that short little laugh. "There's been so much going on to-night I'm afraid I've lost track of everything except myself. I think I've got you a job."

"Really, Bee? How wonderful!" But Delia's thoughts were not on jobs.

"You're to see a Mr. Lane in the morning. I have the address in my bag. And I'd be fairly prompt. By ten, anyway."

Delia's gaze dropped to the floor, then sought again the now frankly yawning Bee. "Do you think—would I have to go right to work? I mean—you see, this is Friday, and I thought I might be away over Sunday."

There was nothing one could say to a girl with that hopelessly unreal look on her face. Thinking wearily of what her effort to find that job had cost her, Bee turned away.

"Oh, I imagine they could wait until Monday," she said. "But just the same, I'd see this Mr. Lane in the morning."

"Oh, I will! Of course, Bee! And thank you ever so much for all your kindness!"

In the bedroom Bee laughed once more in that nervous way, but silently. So Delia's cap was over the windmill! And Arthur, of all men! She was fairly rushing into it. Moth and flame stuff! It was odd that the revelation should come as a bit of a shock; and odder yet that it should stir in her breast a touch of dread uncomfortably like what she would have termed, in another, a conservative reaction. But then with a shrug she tumbled into bed and went healthily to sleep.

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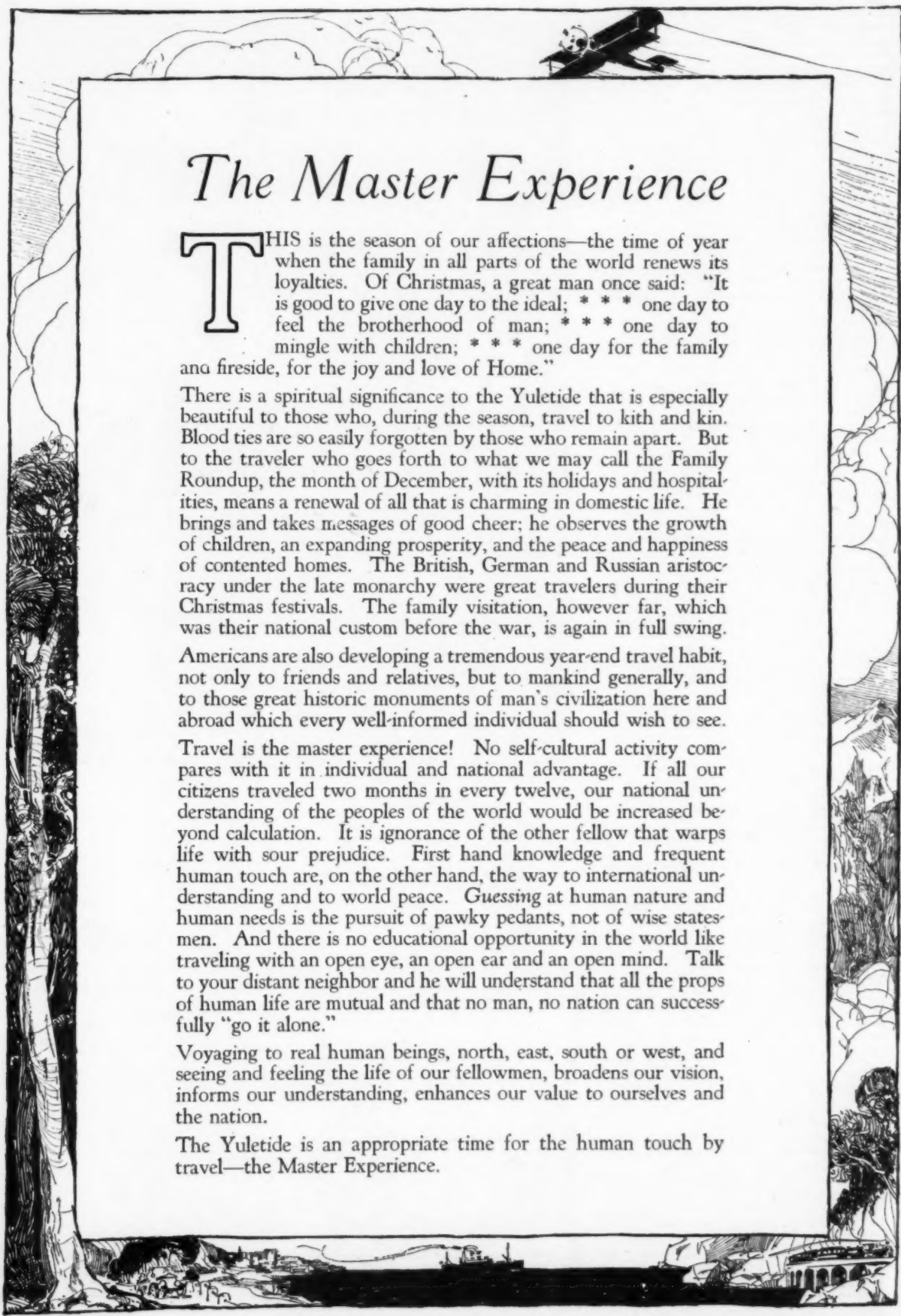
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THIS is the season of our affections—the time of year when the family in all parts of the world renews its loyalties. Of Christmas, a great man once said: "It is good to give one day to the ideal; * * * one day to feel the brotherhood of man; * * * one day to mingle with children; * * * one day for the family and fireside, for the joy and love of Home."

There is a spiritual significance to the Yuletide that is especially beautiful to those who, during the season, travel to kith and kin. Blood ties are so easily forgotten by those who remain apart. But to the traveler who goes forth to what we may call the Family Roundup, the month of December, with its holidays and hospitalities, means a renewal of all that is charming in domestic life. He brings and takes messages of good cheer; he observes the growth of children, an expanding prosperity, and the peace and happiness of contented homes. The British, German and Russian aristocracy under the late monarchy were great travelers during their Christmas festivals. The family visitation, however far, which was their national custom before the war, is again in full swing.

Americans are also developing a tremendous year-end travel habit, not only to friends and relatives, but to mankind generally, and to those great historic monuments of man's civilization here and abroad which every well-informed individual should wish to see.

Travel is the master experience! No self-cultural activity compares with it in individual and national advantage. If all our citizens traveled two months in every twelve, our national understanding of the peoples of the world would be increased beyond calculation. It is ignorance of the other fellow that warps life with sour prejudice. First hand knowledge and frequent human touch are, on the other hand, the way to international understanding and to world peace. Guessing at human nature and human needs is the pursuit of pawky pedants, not of wise statesmen. And there is no educational opportunity in the world like traveling with an open eye, an open ear and an open mind. Talk to your distant neighbor and he will understand that all the props of human life are mutual and that no man, no nation can successfully "go it alone."

Voyaging to real human beings, north, east, south or west, and seeing and feeling the life of our fellowmen, broadens our vision, informs our understanding, enhances our value to ourselves and the nation.

The Yuletide is an appropriate time for the human touch by travel—the Master Experience.

Chapter Eleven

IT was Lou's nature, when a difficult task lay before her, to handle it in a business-like way. She had now to dispose of Wilbur, and meant to do it briskly and completely. She didn't like leaving loose ends. There wasn't a great deal of time to do it in, for she made it a matter of principle never to be late at the office. It was really, she reflected as she went upstairs to waken him, a bit of a surgical job. The more cleanly it was done, the better. Bee had hit on the truth in her amusingly sputtering way; the only possible way she could help Wilbur would be to set him squarely on his own legs and leave him there.

His door opened, to her surprise, before she could knock. He was dressed, with his hat on, and his coat over his arm. "I heard you coming up," he said. "I was just going down after you. I'm afraid I've got to talk with you, Lou."

"Yes," said she. "We'll go outside for breakfast."

Silently they descended the stairs and let themselves out into the crisp sunshine. Lou led the way to the most conspicuous restaurant in the Square. She was thinking, as they walked, of what Bee had said about breakfasting in public with him. And she was thinking deeply of Leslie. Bee was a dear, but was hardly mature enough to understand how painfully the heartstrings can be twisted and hurt. She didn't care who might see them. She wouldn't hide. Let them talk! Les would have to learn to meet the facts as an adult. Of course he wasn't quite an adult. There lay the little difficulty. And it was a difficulty. If her logical mind had already turned against the man she loved, her emotions proved quite another matter. Quite a problem, indeed. She knew she was in for bad hours and lonely nights. No helping that! However, here was this forlorn boy. Better put her mind on him. Usually as talkative, as naive, as a child, he was grave now.

They took a corner table. She looked him over with cool, quiet eyes. His color was off, and his eyes far from clear. The sensitive mouth twitched nervously, and every now and then he pressed his lips together in what was evidently and pathetically a mighty effort at self-control. She found her interest quickened, as well as her sympathy, for she had never seen him quite like this. He was living through a battle, apparently putting up a real fight.

HE opened the conversation. "First, Lou, I think I'd better say just this: I know I made a fool of myself last night."

"Let's not talk about that, Wilbur," She said it kindly.

"We won't. I just had to say that much. I—I haven't slept any. Didn't take off my clothes all night."

"But that isn't wise. More than anything else you need sleep."

"There'll be times for that." He moved a slender hand. "As a matter of fact, it was worth while. I've thought it all out. Got my balance back. And I know what I've got to do. I've been thinking; in a way we were wrong in what we did."

"Perhaps."

"But we were right, too. There had to be some sort of a break with Mother. That has become very clear to me. We couldn't go on as we were. But now we've had the break. It marks the end of something in my life. And now I'm beginning something else."

Lou had never seen him in this sensitively firm mood. He had the air of one who is building the conversation to a definite and difficult end. The whining incompetent of the previous evening had disappeared. For the first time in their acquaintance the thought rose in her mind that there might

be mettle in him. Certainly there was a measure, at least, of resiliency. He hadn't quite cracked—not yet. If he had struck bottom in the evening, it was only to rebound. Reflecting on her own firm purpose in meeting him, she nearly smiled. As yet, she'd hardly spoken a word. He had taken charge.

"I'm not going to dwell on the past, Lou." He was pushing a salt-shaker this way and that. "That's no good, of course. All I'll say is that if I—well, if I succeed in working this out, I shall owe everything to you." ("Oh, come!" said Lou.) "Yes, I shall. You saw clear into the situation. You made yourself no end of trouble." ("Really, Wilbur—") "by pitching in and helping me take a stand. I didn't see it as you did." ("You were too close to it.") "But please listen, Lou! All this is rather difficult to say. And I've got to say it. What I finally got into my head during the night—it was queer; I made endless sketches. Tried a lot of you—your head. Some day I want to make a real head of you, see if I can't catch your poise and that look about your eyes. It's baffled me some. What I was saying is that I did, I think, get the thing clear in my head. I'm in a queer fix. You'd think a man, if he had anything in him at all, could deal decently with his own mother."

"Don't underrate the problem, Wilbur."

"I don't think I do. Anyhow, what I'm getting at is that it isn't your problem. It's mine. And you can't handle it for me. It's just one of those human puzzles a person has to work out alone—or fail to work out. I don't know that it particularly matters which. But I am sure now—I should have seen it all along—that no one else can do it for me."

"YES," said she gently—she was deeply moved; no need now to rub it in. "Yes, I suppose that's the truth of it. But what is it you're planning to do?"

"I'm going back to Mother."

"Are you sure that you—"

"I've thought it over from every possible angle." He smiled unhappily. "All night! But the point is, I'm going back with a difference. I want you to understand that it's your help that has cleared the air for me. There had to be the break—something clean and sharp. You saw that. Well, we've had it. She'll know now that a change has come. And there are some things about that, little things, perhaps, but— It will be an issue. She'll never let me alone. Be at me all the time. Mother can keep at you. . . . However, I've got to take my stand. I've got to. And I know all the difficulties. All of them." He pressed his lips together. "I'm afraid we'll have to go through some quarrels. If I were surer of my own nerves, it would be easier. But I've got to take my stand, no matter what it comes to. I realize that she has driven me into this inferiority complex. All my life she's been at it. She's so dominant—and so persistent. She knows just where my most sensitive nerves are, and how to play on them. She doesn't mean to be unkind. It's more like a blind instinct. I know. But I've got to see that no matter what happens, even if it kills her,"—he drew in his breath with a nervous shudder—"I've got to see it through. And I've got to try to be kind to her. I've thought of some things I can do. Have flowers in the apartment, and take her out to the theater once in a while—you know, not just fight against her influence all the time. Don't you think that's the best way, Lou?"

She, clasping her hands before her on the table, considering him, found her eyes filling. She contrived to say: "Yes, Wilbur, you're right. You're taking the only fine course. It'll be hard, but I'm afraid there's no easy way out."

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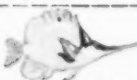
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"I know." He drew in his breath again in that sharp way. "I know." She thought, even though the notion seemed at the moment to border on absurdity, of men fighting for their lives, desperate men. "But I've got to try," he finished, rather lamely.

THEY were silent for a time. Lou sipped her coffee. For once in her capable life she found herself completely at a loss. As incapable as he had been in the evening.

"Better eat your breakfast, Wilbur," she said, to break the tension of the silence. "Food is useful, you know."

"Yes, I know." He ate a little, then laid down his egg-spoon. "But I'm coming to what I've got to ask you. It's pretty difficult. I—" That sentence didn't get really begun. But after a moment he went at it again, resolutely. "It's a lot to ask, what I'm going to ask of you. Probably it's weak in me. I just thought it would—of course, you may feel you couldn't do any such thing—"

"What is it?" she asked, almost sharply. He raised his eyes for a moment, then lowered them. He reached with a fumbling hand for that salt-shaker. She wished he'd leave it alone.

"Well, I can ask it. And you can refuse. It won't make any difference in our friendship. I just felt—"

"Wilbur, what is it?"

"You see, Mother's deepest fear is that I'll marry. I've known that for years. You didn't know that I was engaged for a while. Three years ago. It didn't get anywhere. She—" His voice failed him, but he came back to it. "She really broke it off—the things she said and did. It was on her nerves so. Well, anyway, here's what I've been working out. It's the only course I seem to be able to see. I've got to do everything possible to make her realize that it's a real break—and then start in trying to be decent—kinder than I have been. And I wondered if you—if you'd be willing to let me tell her I'm engaged to you."

Her lids drooped. She thought swiftly, wondering at first if he was merely traveling that emotional circle of the evening, and then considering the many possible complications.

He went on with a sort of eagerness: "Of course, I realize now that you could never marry me. I guess I was crazy. I'm not the—I wouldn't tell anybody else. And it needn't mean a thing. Just to help me now."

"It would get out," said she.

"It needn't—not in your crowd down here. You see, I want her to see that I've actually bought a ring, and—"

"Oh, no," said she. "No ring!"

"I—" He hesitated. "I'm afraid that would be part of it."

"I want to help you, Wilbur—in any possible way. But I'm afraid I can't let you give me a ring."

"I want to show it to her. And I couldn't hide it in the apartment. She goes through everything—opens my letters—everything."

"There's your desk at the office. She can't very well get into that."

"That's so. I hadn't thought. Perhaps I was partly selfish in that. I couldn't help wanting to—well, to find a beautiful stone and give it to you. Even if it meant nothing except how I feel. You've been so—there'll never be anybody—"

He faltered. And she sat thinking. Finally she looked at him in her direct way, and smiled gently.

"All right," she said. "I'll do it. I'll do what I can, if it will help you work it out. Yes, I could go through with that. I'll come and have dinner with you and her. Act it out the best I can. Yes, I could do that."

Misgivings came later at the office. It was an odd tangle. Rather theatrical, she

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felt—with possibilities of development in the direction of comedy as well as of somewhat more serious drama. It could no more have been explained to Leslie than to a child of two. He would settle down on the unshakable belief that she had played double all along. Still—well, she had said she would do it, and she would. Bee wasn't to know. He was moving right out of the house.

It was settled. She dismissed it from her mind, and went on about the day's work.

Chapter Twelve

BEE came home from the theater on that Saturday night, her last night of regular work, in fatalistic mood. Her thoughts, as she climbed to the apartment, were on anything but the tempestuous Fred.

Lou, curled up on the couch, reading, greeted her with a significant nod toward the center-table. A small parcel lay there, nearly covered with insurance stamps. Bee lifted it and turned it over in her hand.

"Aren't you going to open it?" Lou asked.

"Why should I? It's from Fred."

"Haven't you any curiosity? My word, I have!"

"I don't know." Bee hung up her coat and hat, and then, returning to the table, picked it up again. "What do you suppose it is?"

"Rather looks like jewelry."

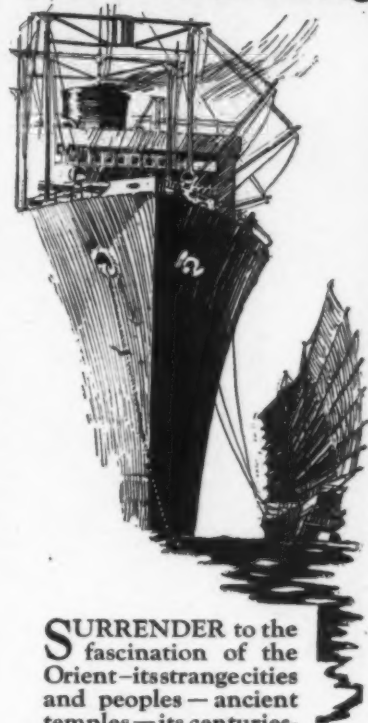
"Hmp!" Bee weighed it in her hand; then, with another little "Hmp!" slowly untied the knotted string. "Jewelry is right," she said, opening the box within the wrappings and exhibiting a platinum bracelet. "Hmp! Diamonds!"

Lou grinned—then threw back her head and laughed aloud as Bee, with an indignant expression (she was too weary for humor) reached quickly for the telephone. "Shucks!" she said. "Why not keep it. I wouldn't mind wearing it. I will say Fred has nice ideas. And he couldn't be called stingy."

But the adamant Bee sent it straight back by district messenger. Her only remark regarding the incident, after the boy had come and gone, was: "Wish I'd waited an hour—just to be reasonably sure of waking him up. But I'm too sleepy myself."

All day Monday Bee tramped Broadway, looking her desperate prettiest, going from one theatrical office to another. Nearly everywhere she was confronted with the familiar placard, "Positively no engagements today." Other girls and women, in similar cases—girls with bobbed heads and suspiciously coppery hair, tall girls and little ingénues—were coming and going in and out of the musty corridors, and a few men. She had to admit that nearly all these ingénues were younger than she, in particular the few who found it possible to get work. The cry of the Broadway theaters was for youth. Technique hardly mattered, at the moment, if you were young enough and lovely enough to the eye. Yet—here arose the old paradox—you must have technique enough to have played a few reasonably conspicuous parts before the producers would even admit you into their offices. Or so it seemed. She fell to wondering, as she sat in one crowded outer office, about these extremely young girls. Was there a measure of truth in the legend that certain of them were put forward by wealthy protectors? Perhaps. A few of the others had been born to the craft, tumbling about the stage as small children and with important family connections. Certain ones had dragon mothers to fight their battles for them. . . . No great man of the theater had ever offered to protect her. Apparently they looked for naïve youth. "A girl of sixteen stands more chance," she mused, while one such was received with marked courtesy and ushered past the waiting groups into the mysterious inner regions of success. And

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then, "That sort of man wouldn't know what to say to an independent-minded college woman. Hmp! For all I can see," she mused, with a faint smile, "it's not so easy to go wrong on Broadway."

When she reached home, at six o'clock, aching with weariness, she found Lou standing over an enormous cabinet with a tall pile of disk records beside it on a chair.

"Mrs. Nellstrom must have let them in with it," said Lou. "Did you ever see anything so big! It's a regular house." And she added: "There's a note tied to the handle."

"I'm not going to read it."

"Oh, come!"

"You can, if you want to. Not me."

Lou opened the envelope, then chuckled. "Fred is a man of ideas, in his rather primitive way, Bee. He says: 'Try waking me up with this, and see what luck you have.'"

"Well—" Bee knit her brows.

"He's rather got you there, old thing. I can't quite picture a messenger-boy carrying that structure uptown under his arm."

"All right. But it goes straight back in the morning. I don't care what it costs."

A dried rose-petal fluttered from the envelope to the floor.

"Mm!" observed Lou. "Romantic stuff."

"If he's romantic, I'm not," said Bee savagely, disappearing into the bedroom.

But nevertheless she returned home on the following evening with a measure of dread; and even, as the week wore on and no further gifts appeared, with a little pique. Without a word Fred appeared to have dropped his campaign. It could hardly mean that he had changed overnight. He wasn't that sort. Nor was it likely that the prompt return of that monstrous cabinet had discouraged him. More likely he would pop up when she least looked for it.

"I'll say this for Fred," she remarked one morning over the coffee, "he did pretty nearly set me on edge. I'm beginning to wish I could get out of this damn' town for a while."

"Where could you go?"

Bee spread her hands. "Nowhere. I certainly won't give up and go back home. I'll never do that!"

THAT morning Lou carried uptown the mental picture of a spirit that seemed rather beaten down into doggedness. The old smile wasn't so quick and bright of late. Of course, that task of trudging from office to office, looking every moment her brightest and prettiest, was a wearing experience. And the time was rapidly passing even when a bit might be picked up in a spring try-out. Lou watched her during the next few days with guarded concern. She knew that Bee wouldn't welcome any effusive sympathy. Neither of them went in for that sort of thing. One small opportunity came, to do an ugly little rôle with one of those hopeful semi-amateur groups that of recent years have made themselves felt in New York. The play was a bitter tragedy of rural life in Czecho-Slovakia, the theater a built-over stable, the pay nothing at all. After some hesitation, weighing the remote possibility that the production might attract sufficient critical attention to prove a stepping-stone to better things, Bee decided against it.

Instead, she went back into one of the more popular of the Village restaurants, where she had worked before in similar lean times, and where her pleasantly fresh personality was welcomed as an asset. This place was in a basement over near Washington Square, and was known as the Peacock Feather. As a waitress she received the merest pittance, but had her dinners free; and furthermore, since she didn't have to report until tea-time, the middle hours of each day were still hers to walk Broadway.

The proprietors were two well-known young women of the Village, pseudo-artists both, and most of the patrons were Bohemian acquaintances. Russian tea and sundry exotic dishes were served. Bee wore a becoming apron of unbleached linen from a hand loom, with an edging of embroidery in the bright blues and reds and greens of Eastern Europe.

LOU made it a point to drop in nearly every evening for dinner. She had decorated the interior boldly in peacock colors, and was a privileged character there.

One evening, when all but the last of the diners had drifted out, Bee brought her own dinner as usual to the table where Lou sat smoking.

"Bee," said Lou,—she was in sober mood,—"they're closing 'The Gondoliers' next week. The cast all have their notices."

"Hm! Then I'm not so much worse off than the rest of them. Only two weeks' pay."

"Business seems to be falling off fast." Lou looked away toward the wide front window and the steps that led up to the sidewalk, and drummed lightly on the table. "It's going to come down pretty hard on Leslie. He expected it to run on into the summer. He won't have put by a cent. I don't quite see what he'll do."

"Probably drift along like the rest of us," remarked Bee. "He's able-bodied." His name hadn't come up in their talk since the night Lou destroyed his letter. That other letters had come since, Bee knew—bulky ones. One or two she had herself brought up from the mail-box, to leave them casually on the table. What became of them after that she didn't know. She hadn't seen Lou reading them.

Lou moodily deposited the ash of her cigarette in a saucer. "Of course you've noticed," she said, "I'm not having any too happy a time these days."

"Well, I have rather thought—"

"Oh, you'd see it. I'm afraid he needs me." She smoked thoughtfully. "It did seem best to stop the affair—cut it off short. But it's pretty difficult." There was a rather long silence; then Lou added this: "I used to think you could benefit by your emotions—use them for stimulus, even. But I'm not so sure. Once you really let go—"

"That's what has always scared me," said Bee. "I've never been able to face it." She reached for her friend's cigarette-case. "Hm! Yes, it scares me. Probably I've been right. If you find it hard to swing, with your poise and mentality, I never could. Never in the world. I know I'm a child in some ways. And it's no game for children. Of course I've considered it. If I really had a mind—but I haven't."

"That's nonsense."

"Not at all. I haven't—not like yours. You know perfectly well that your brain is a trained machine."

"I don't know any such thing." Lou's voice had taken on a slight edge that Bee hadn't heard in it before. "The devil of it is, I'm simply beset by emotion. Hemmed in! Les is at me all the time, of course. He's discouraged. Doesn't seem to have any independent drive in him. And at the office I have Wilbur all day."

"Oh, I'd half forgotten Wilbur."

"I haven't." Lou sighed. "He's a whipped dog. Doesn't say anything, but I can't get away from it. There he is, all the time. The fact is, dear, I'm shaken. It certainly is no game for children. I'm beginning to wonder if I'm not a child too. But there's no good in talk."

SO she dismissed it. For Lou, never given to self-pity or to personal confession, this had been a good deal of an outburst.

Bee went to the kitchen for her dessert. When she returned, their talk veered to other

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matters. Bee reported a fruitless but amusing interview with a producer, while Lou listened, more her usual controlled self now, smoking away and idly watching the legs of passers-by on the sidewalk.

"Have you heard the news about Arthur Rockwell?" Lou asked, as a random memory stirred.

Bee looked up quickly.

"Come to think of it, I was asked not to say anything. Jo Abelson told me. He's going too."

"Going where?"

"On that big Museum expedition to Central America. Next month. Jo says Arthur is in a state of excitement about it. Deciphering old inscriptions and studying primitive literary forms."

"Central America in summer," mused Bee. "It sounds hot."

"I don't know that the tropics are any hotter in summer than in winter. Probably the thing is to avoid the rainy season."

"It's nuts for Arthur, of course," said Bee. "But what'll Delia do? He could hardly—"

"Take her? Oh, no. Not with that sort of proper, scholarly outfit. If he tried it, they'd never let him bring her back. I'd have you to understand, young woman, that the morality of this fair land is above reproach." Then, abruptly, she touched Bee's arm and added, in a lower voice: "Look! See who's here!"

COMING down the steps from the street were two figures, a man and a girl. Bee looked, and recognized Delia, gently pretty in a light frock with outer coat thrown back and a snug little round hat—obviously a new hat. Behind her, carelessly at his ease, as always, swinging a bamboo cane, strolled Arthur Rockwell. They made their way to a table across the room. Arthur hung up his hat and cane, dropped into a chair, and began intently studying the menu. The choice of food was always a serious matter to him.

It was a moment later that Delia saw them. She smiled, and waved her hand. Then, after hesitating and glancing at the absorbed Arthur, she got up and crossed to their table. "It's an age since I've seen you," she said, in an oddly effusive manner. "How have you been?"

"Oh, all right," replied Lou.

"And Bee, I haven't really thanked you for all you did—"

"Oh, that's nothing," smiled Bee.

"I mean getting me the job. It's really pretty good, you know. The work is interesting. Lots of life about the place. Energy and snap. They're starting things on a tremendous scale. I'm quite a part of it already. And Mr. Kendall is awfully kind and nice." Mr. Kendall was Fred.

It wasn't the Delia of a week or so back. This was a guardedly smiling girl whose eyes studied their faces as she spoke. Those eyes fell now on Bee's apron.

"Oh, Bee, are you working here? How interesting!"

"Well," said Bee dryly, "it helps out."

Arthur saw them now, and nodded, off-hand. "Come, dear," he called to Delia, "you haven't told me what you want to eat."

It was nothing, that "dear," you heard the word everywhere about the Village. But at the sound, Delia's lids fluttered downward and a touch of color crept into her cheeks. "Well—" she began; then: "How awfully nice to have seen you!"

"Look in at the room some evening," said Lou cheerfully.

"I will. Of course. I simply don't seem able to get any time to myself at all." She laughed a little. "We just must have a visit. You girls were so kind. Are you going to Provincetown this summer?"

"I haven't the remotest idea where I'm going," said Bee. "Are you?"

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"Well, I'll be working, of course. But"—she squared her slim shoulders—"Arthur has a little shack down there, you know. I—I should be able to run down week-ends. It'll be nice. I've never seen Provincetown. . . . Coming, dear!"

She moved back across the room. "Curious," observed Lou, looking after her. "Self-conscious, isn't she?" "Lou,"—Bee was thinking intently,—"she doesn't know."

"No. Obviously."
"And he'll let her go on—"
"Certainly. When he's ready for the next

thing, he'll simply flit. You know Arthur. He'd never stand for scenes."

"We could hardly butt in."

"No. Hardly."

"Too bad," said Bee. Then: "I wish to high heaven I could see Provincetown on my itinerary some time in these next few months! Or Central America! Or any place!"

(The ensuing chapters in Samuel Merwin's extraordinary novel of rebellious youth are even more deeply interesting. Don't fail to read them when they appear—in the next, the January, issue.)

THE OLD HOME TOWN

(Continued from page 61)

him on the field. Her honor was satisfied. He owed her an apology, but she owed him nothing. She felt rather a fool for having missed the good dinner that Mrs. Budlong had offered her for the sake of dining on the sharp herbs of her family penury. Only her pride kept her from going forth to seek a reconciliation with her aunt.

She did not realize how necessary she was to Mrs. Budlong's plans. That great manager had entertained Mr. Bleecker with the best that Carthage afforded in the way of grace and beauty. She had permitted him to meet Myra Eppley, who was still a rosebud—at least, she had never bloomed, but had shriveled in her tight calyx, and still clung to the vine. Another guest was Beulah, the silly, snickering daughter of the widow who was still known from her one experience of glory as Mrs. Ex-Mayor Cinnamon.

There were two or three others with young men at their elbows, and Mr. Bleecker made a noble effort to have a good time. He was the gayest, the least affected, and the most straightforward person at the feast.

But Mrs. Budlong saw that he needed just such a girl as Odalea. Besides, she was not giving banquets in order to marry off other people's girls to this young angel from Fifth Avenue. He belonged to her family. She had seen him first.

Odalea's mutiny only stimulated Mrs. Budlong's fine fighting spirit. Back of the smiling face that beamed on Mr. Bleecker, a masterly brain was at work. She arranged for Mr. Bleecker to come to her house the next afternoon for tea. In the morning she dropped in on Mrs. Lail and told her of the trap she had set for Odalea. Mrs. Lail was to send the girl over to her aunt's on an errand—to borrow a pattern. Odalea would never suspect a tea-party: she would walk in on Mr. Bleecker and—and then let nature take her course.

She was overjoyed when Mrs. Lail whispered to her: "Odalea stayed in all evening and nobody came. She wouldn't let on, but I know she was waiting on that awful Ben Webb."

"All the better for us," said Mrs. Budlong. "She'll take to Mr. Bleecker now just for spite."

AND even so it was done. Odalea made no demur to her mother's request that she run over to her aunt's for a pattern. She suspected nothing. Or did she suspect something? She certainly went upstairs and put on her best daytime frock—in spite of the threat of rain. And in spite of the threat of rain she would not carry an umbrella. This looked suspiciously like suspicion that she had better look her best.

She found her aunt in the most cheerful of humors. The spat of two nights ago was forgotten, though Mrs. Budlong was a little absent-minded and made a strange delay of finding the pattern. And she kept going to the window to see if it was going to rain, yet never looked at the sky, but always at the curb-block. At last the rain

came—with a hurrah, and a great stampede of silver-shod cavalry. The rain came whooping, cheering, laughing. And just at the crest of its rush, a long, low racing-car ran up to the curb-block, and from it came a tall, bright laughing youth, a very rain-god out of a cloud. And he came charging to the door and gave the bell a yank that turned it into sleighbells shaken over snow.

He walked into the parlor, brushing the bright diamonds from his big shoulders and apologizing for being late. He was so hearty that Odalea was laughing with him before he saw her. When he saw her, he stopped laughing, and when Mrs. Budlong presented him to, "My niece, Miss Lail—Miss Odalea Lail," he bowed to her very low from where he stood. When he lifted his head and looked at her again, his glance had in it the gesture of one who offers a tribute.

He recovered speedily, and became his impudent self. He turned on Mrs. Budlong and frowningly demanded:

"Why didn't you have her here last night? Were you holding out on me, or just getting me ready for the good news?"

A wave of his hand indicated that Odalea was the good news.

Mrs. Budlong was wise enough to smile craftily. This might mean all that the ready flatterer suggested with his two-edged compliment. It saved her from explaining that Odalea had been absent on account of an unfulfilled engagement with a plumber!

Odalea took some comfort from her aunt's silence. It would not have sounded quite so fine to have it told to this first-born of a fourth vice-president that she had been reduced to an affair with a small-town gas-fitter.

When Mrs. Budlong's negro maid came in with a tray of tea-things, Odalea realized that the whole affair was a conspiracy. Yet she did not resent it now. She felt it rather splendid of her aunt to be establishing tea as an institution. Of course, she hid her own surprise and pretended that the Budlong home was like an English mansion in that one could not visit it with impunity in the late afternoon and expect to escape tea. If she had only known that Mrs. Budlong had visited Strouther and Streckfuss' that morning in the hope of buying one of those baby-carriages they bring in the tea in! There was not one in town, but Mrs. Budlong had made them telegraph for one.

Of all this plotting Mr. Bleecker was naturally unaware. In fact, he never assumed conspiracy anywhere. He expected everybody to be as superior or indifferent to pretense as he was. He took the world as he found it, and let the world take him as it found him. What he liked he praised: what he hated, he denounced—and let the company keep the change.

He had hardly known Odalea for five minutes before he was saying:

"Gosh, but I'm glad you're alive!"

It startled her to hear him say, "Gosh." She had supposed that it was used only by farmers on the stage, and did not know that

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it is one of the favorite swears of the English nobility.

But he was storming on with his whirlwind enthusiasm: "When that ghastly train dumped me out on that gosh-awful levee at the foot of the hill, and I caught my first glimpse of this—well, I can't tell you what I called the town. You're too young to know. Well, I wired my loving dad that he had played the dirtiest trick ever played on a loving son, and that I disowned him for not giving me a return-trip ticket. The only thing that kept me from hopping the first freight out like a hobo, was that I wanted to stay and see the faces of the other fellers when they dropped off. I wouldn't miss it for a million."

"Then I presented my note to dear Mrs. Budlong, and the darling took me in and gave me a party, and had young females around; and I looked 'em over, and said: 'Not so bad!' Pretty bad, some of 'em, but not so bad as I expected. And now you come in, and—well—say, you're not married or engaged or anything, are you? For God's sake, say no."

"No!" said Odalea with a queer little quirk of whimsy that meant nothing and everything.

Chapter Twenty

WHEN the tea was over, the rain was over. So Odalea said: "Well, I really must be going."

And Mr. Bleecker said:

"That's odd! For so must I. And odder still, I'm going your way—whichever it is."

Mrs. Budlong laughed and laughed, and cuffed him on the elbow and said to Odalea: "My dear, isn't he a darling?"

Odalea could hardly answer that either way, so she just made a face and fluttered her eyelids violently at him like hummingbird's wings. And he closed his eyes and groaned: "Don't! I can't stand everything!"

She felt silly, but was glad of it. She was so horribly eager for some one to play the fool with. Her life was such a deadly earnestness about nothing at all.

They left the house and walked out into a world bathed and hung with crystal beads wherever a drop of rain could cling and shatter the light.

"Little universe looks like a chandelier or something," said Mr. Bleecker. "My car is full of rain, but I have a mackintosh in the cupboard that will keep you dry."

"Thank you—don't trouble. I'll walk," said Odalea.

"But why? When the perambulator here is just aching for you!"

So she let him dig out the raincoat and

spread it over the soppy cushion and establish her in a divanlike seat so low that when he started the car, she felt as if she were being dragged through space by the heels, not at all uncomfortably reclining on her shoulder-blades.

She told him just where to turn to get to her house, and pointed it out with some shame, though she was glad to see that the rain had done more for it than it deserved.

"Oh, is that your house? So glad to know!" he said, and passed it at a pace of about thirty-five miles an hour.

"Where are you taking me?" Odalea cried. "That doesn't matter," he answered. "The problem is where are you taking me? I want to see if the rain has carried off the river or anything!"

Before she knew it, he was whizzing round corners and coasting down the long hill and was on the bridge. Since automobiles do not trot, it was not necessary for them to go slow. And since automobiles are not afraid of their big elder brothers, the locomotives, he passed the switch-engine without shying.

Automobiles were no novelty to Odalea. She had spent whole days in Ulie Budlong's car, but Ulie was so unlike Mr. Bleecker that the sensation was something new. It terrified Odalea to see the speed he kept as they wound round the sluiceway road. In the dark covered bridge he simply switched on his headlights, and the bridge was only a brief roar and it was dropped behind.

The car condensed space and time as if they were accordion-pleated. In a few minutes they had traversed a distance that Ben's horses had spent nearly an hour upon. And the horses had taken a vast amount of attention, created incessant anxiety and constantly asserted their own perversities.

But this car! It was simply Mr. Bleecker's will on wheels. He thought speed, and there was speed. He thought light, and there was light. He talked on as gayly as if some one else were driving.

The river was a glory, the sunset an apocalypse of Judgment Day radiance, with colors like archangelic trumpets. The very sky put on magnificence for this rich young man, who was so used to munificence that he gave the imperial jubilee a glance and murmured:

"Not half bad, eh—for a sunset, what?"

She resented this. Even this young man had no right to be flippant about a scene of such wonder that the sky was a New Jerusalem dressed like a bride with the sunbeams chanting hallelujahs to the Throne. When she saw that he was studying her instead of the tumultuous splendor back of him, she cried:

"Look—look!"

"I'm looking!" he answered, staring at her harder.

THEN, as he saw that she was hurt by his indifference to what Carthage evidently took most pride in, he turned his car off the road, ran it down to the water's edge and confronted the mighty west in all its panoply.

He lifted his hat to it and nodded his head and said:

"Wonderful!"

It was plainly a good deal for him to say of anything less than a girl. She took the will for the words he could not find. He added a little more:

"It beats the Vale of Chamonix at sunrise, don't you think? I thought the sunsets across the Palisades were pretty fair, didn't you? But this leaves 'em gaping. Neat, but not gaudy, I call it."

She thanked him for assuming that she had seen Chamonix and New York, but she said: "We'd better hurry home now."

Then he went back to the road and drove north in spite of her protests. He shot along the ridge where she and Ben had come so near their deaths. He met only one team,

Scott Fitzgerald

In a few months the subject of most dinner-table conversations will be Scott Fitzgerald's new book of "Stories for Adults." And the story that will lead that book is the one which begins the next issue of this magazine, called—

"The Rich Boy."

and the long howl of his horn had warned the driver so well that he had drawn his horses off the road before they reached him.

Mr. Blecker came out upon the level and chose, of all places, the inlet for his turning ground. He swung in a joyous circle, and his huge tires ran over some of the rain-sodden relics of Odalea's feast with Ben—the cans and the boxes and the little broken windowpane of honey. How sad and cheap they looked, yet pitiful, too! She tried to gaze back, but the car was gone too soon, and retracing its course over the ridge road. That was only an incident. The long course where Ben had forced the runaway horses to such speed was loaded across at twice the pace.

It was odd that Ben the machinist should have chosen to drive horses, and with the ironic result of throwing himself back into a primitive era. Odalea remembered him now as something quaint, obsolete, impossible in contrast with this Mr. Blecker, who was a modern of the moderns.

The covered bridge was a throttled whoop, the winding sluiceway road a bit of scalloped track, the great bridge not a quarter of its former length.

They came up into Main Street, where the lighted street- and store-lamps warred with the lingering sunset. Then they whirled away into the side-streets and were at her home before she could believe her eyes. She had made so long a journey in so brief a time that she felt as if she had known Mr. Blecker for years, though it was not yet three hours.

He had said nothing at all to her of love, beyond a few compliments whose lavishness she took rather as proofs of his extravagance than his opinion. Yet he had carried her off more helplessly than Ben Webb had done.

And when he helped her out and bade her good night, there was even less dismissal than in Ben's farewell.

Chapter Twenty-one

THERE were so many rides after this, and so many parties, that Mrs. Budlong in self-defense compelled Odalea to buy some new clothes and advanced her money or guaranteed her credit. For the man who had taken an option on the Lail lots had failed to make good. Another man had come along, but it was not possible to fool hope a second time, and the usual slump had set in. Still, the real-estate dealers in town were encouraged to knock the cobwebs off their signs, wash their windows and replace the fly-freckled cards with new ones.

The railroad actually began to build its shops and round-houses. Offices were rented in a dusty building where lawyers had slept and dreamed of clients that never came or came on petty cases not worth winning.


Ben Webb and his partner were busy. The offices had to have lights put in, and wash-basins; and there was a vast amount of work to be done about the new shops. Furthermore, the residents of the town began to yawn and stretch and decide that part of their long drowsiness must be due to sewer-gas.

But prosperity is almost harder to capitalize than failure. Guido said to Ben on one of the rare occasions when he could get home to a meal and finish it:

"You must be simply reeking with prosperity. Where are you hiding all your money?"

"Prosperity? Good Lord, if you know anybody that will lend us some money, tell me. Everybody buys from us on credit, and we've got to pay cash for our materials and labor. A couple more orders, and we'll go broke."

"Or as Pyrrhus said," said Guido the literary, "if we have such another victory we are undone!"




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"Did he?" said Ben. "Well, he said something when he said that."

"Can't I turn in and help?"
"You stick to your books. There's grease enough on the family neck. As soon as I cash in on this drive, I'm going to start you off to college."

"Not me!" said Guido. "I can read anywhere. If you get any money, ship Petunia off to the city. A mocking-bird can't get anywhere where there're only cats and screech-owls to mock."

"Petunia goes too," said Ben. "Just you wait!"

THEY waited. He toiled. He read in the papers about the dances and receptions and teas and church sociables and picnics that had turned the town into a carnival. In all the lists of guests "Miss Lail" was among the "Misses," and Mr. Blecker among the "Messers," and at the head of all the lists of "Mesdames" stood Mrs. Abou Ben Budlong.

On the street Ben saw Odalea flashing past him, usually in Blecker's car, or in the car of some other foreigner.

The Easterners were seeping in rapidly. Work at the railroad offices was not yet organized sufficiently to keep them at their tasks all day or any evening.

Their tasks were simple: keeping books, checking up pay-vouchers, comparing the bundles of railroad tickets the conductors turned in with the numbers the ticket-agents confessed to having turned out. But on the street the clerks were all princes. They crowded the town beaux into the gutters and chased them up the alleys. The city swells were hated, but feared as well, for in spite of their flossy clothes, they were athletes trained on football-fields. On the tennis-courts they displayed forearms of such brawn as made a town bruiser think twice. They flocked to the canal at dusk and went swimming, and their musculature won such admiration that there was little consolation in making fun of their clothes.

Ben made no effort to intrude on Odalea. He was glad, in a way, that she was so busily happy. He never dreamed of the indictment against him that was still stuck away in a pigeonhole of her heart. He loved her so well that he would have been glad to know that she blamed him for throwing her over, since he feared that she might feel a little guilt for throwing him over. He had the pride of the lowly, and would no more have permitted himself to trespass on her upper world than he would have permitted one of her world to trespass on his dignity.

Sometimes when the night was dark he would slink past her house. If she was at home, he could tell by the Blecker car at the curb. If there was a party somewhere else, he could see her dancing past the window or sitting out on the porch. He could hear her laughter. He loved to hear her laugh, though his heart clenched upon the iron in it like a fist closing on a knife.

He laughed at the Carthage young men who grumbled in exile or took up with the cheaper girls from the other side of Main Street, and even from Blaine's Addition or from the country villages outlying.

Ben went with none of them. He wanted his own mate or none. When he had been the best there was in town, he had proffered himself to Odalea. The best there is is good enough till better comes—or as the quotatious Guido would have twisted it: "The half-gods go when the gods arrive."

The gods invaded even the Webb home, for Petunia had been heard in church where the desperate Easterners carried their flirtations. Nearly every Sunday the whole Webb family went to church. The mother of the brood had been reared a Baptist. Her husband had been as much a Methodist as anything, and she had gone to his church to keep him from having any excuse to stay

at home. The children went to the Methodist Sunday-school, though they wavered in dogma when the United Presbyterian or even the Reformed Lutherans gave an interesting picnic. But they always harked back to Methody until Petunia was offered a salary of ten dollars a month to sing in the Episcopal choir, and then the whole family turned Anglican.

Mrs. Budlong, of course, was Episcopalian, because that was the most fashionable faith. Those had been wonderful Sabbath morns for her when Ulie walked down the aisle in his surplice singing like what she called "a seraphim."

It was well that Ulie had outgrown the choir before Ben Webb turned Episcopalian, for if young Ben had ever seen Ulie march past playing the saint, there would certainly have been a fight in the aisle, and a battered Ulie in a tattered surplice would have fled to the altar for refuge. But these were the days of Ben the Well-behaved, and nothing that Ulie could have done or said would have made Ben forget the dignity he owed to himself as the brother of the soprano.

Every Sunday forenoon Mrs. Webb, like a plump contented hen, led her gangling young roosters into a pew and swelled visibly with pride in them and in the slim young girl who stood up with the paid quartet and sent her carols into the fretted vault and on up to heaven. Mr. Norman Maugans, the organist, who had grown up from the melodeon that wheezed at the Presbyterian prayer-meetings to the high estate of organist at St. Johns, had told Petunia that she was "one of the very best sopranos in Carthage—especially in onsomble work."

This had lifted Petunia to the skies, but Guido had railed at such damnation of faint praise, and growled:

"You're the best singer in the whole blamed universe, and everybody in the world will say so one of these days."

DURING the services, the Webbs sat at Petunia's feet and worshiped upward. Her voice gave and received divinity to and from the divine atmosphere. She sang like an angel: no one on earth could sing better; and doubtless the heavenly choir would be hard put to it to supply her superior.

Happy is that artist, whether time proves him a failure or a success, who is fed while young on the milk and honey of praise at home.

The people of Stratford village who patronized the wool-comber's boy with their "Not so bad's" and their "fairly good considering's," were like the Carthaginians who told Petunia that she "sang purty good" or "wasn't half bad" for a local "sopranna."

But scant as her plaudits were about the town, when she reached home, she was smothered with laurels by the ones that knew her best. Whether it was merely their rabid love that impelled them, or some uncanny intuition of the truth, they could say at last when she sent them clippings from New York and Paris and Milan acclaiming her a diva: "I told you so!"

The first forerunner of the outer world's concealed approval came from one of the Eastern railroadsters, a young fellow from Boston, Cabot Mather. He had arrived late in Carthage, and found most of the belles tied up to earlier immigrants.

For a time he had drifted with a few of the cheaper sort who made strangers informally welcome. Ben had seen young Mather running about at night with Susie Caraway, a girl of violent beauty and defiant recklessness. Her father was a section-hand, and her mother a washerwoman for the cheap hotels.

Susie was noisy as a bluejay and as rapacious of altercation. She captured the lonely descendant of the Mathers and ran him ragged for a while.

Perhaps that was why he wandered bleary-eyed and bewildered into church one morning and found himself half asleep in the Webb pew. When Petunia's voice ran away with the melody of the opening hymn and turned it into something of heavenly affliction, young Mather was paralyzed with amazement. It chanced that she sang a solo for the offertory, "Hear Ye, O Israel," and he sat entranced.

At the end of the service, he checked Guido and said—as it sounded to Guido: "I beg yaw pahdon, but could you tell me the name of the soprahno."

"Miss Webb—Petunia Webb."

"Petunia. How extrawd'n'ry!"

"Don't you like the name?" said Guido with a certain truculence.

"I like everything about hah! She's mahv'lous! Absolewtly mahv'lous! What's she dewing in this awful—I beg pahdon: but you know she ought never to sing in anything less than a cathedral. The Vatican, for instance."

THIS sounded so much like Webb family talk that Guido introduced the young seer to his mother and his two brothers. Mrs. Webb's eyes began to leak, and nothing would do but that Petunia should hear all this herself at first-hand. So they waited until she came around from the choir-room, and Mather told her again what he had said, with embellishments. On the way home, he managed to linger so that Petunia and he were soon out of earshot of the family. But his gestures were enough.

From then on he was always at Petunia's heels. He kept her singing at home. He took her to parties and fought off all the other swains. It pleased Ben and his mother to find the name of Webb in the newspapers among the guests at parties and receptions. But soon Petunia was alleging headaches as a pretext for staying home, and when Ben began to nag her about seeing a doctor, her mother told him:

"The poor child is ashamed to go. She has only one party dress, and she'd rather die than wear it again."

The next morning he dragged her down to Strouther and Streckfuss' Emporium and bearded Mr. Strouther in his lair, saying:

"You folks owe me quite a bill. You give my sister everything she wants, and charge it against my account. If she wants more than you owe me, I'll give you cash. But you doll her up till she makes these Eastern gazebos think they're back at the Worldoff Hotel. And don't let her beg off. You make her take a regular trousseau. The poor thing has a right to somethin'. She's never had anything."

So Petunia wept, and sentimental Mr. Strouther let a pearl slide off one eyelid and bounce into his beard.

This spendthrift orgy gave Ben more pleasure than he had ever dreamed possible from a spending of money on vanities. He had an inkling of wisdom that vanities are the only things on earth worth spending money for.

BUT vanities for the beautiful are paid for by the drudgeries of the unbeautiful; and Ben wondered if that dress for Petunia had not cost a ruinous price, when, coming home late and fagged one night, he paused at the gate to hear her voice.

It floated from the walls of the house as a violin song pours from its resounding shell. Ben lifted the latch with care and opened and closed the gate slowly enough to hush its usual squeals, and set the latch cautiously in place, and tiptoed to the porch and leaned against a post to hear the last dying fall of the beloved melody.

His eyes glancing toward the window where the shade blew away a little in the soft wind, discovered Petunia playing and singing as of yore; but there were arms

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about her shoulders. And when she finished, she lifted her head to a down-bent head that kissed her lips and then her gifted throat. And then Cabot Mather dropped to his knees and laid his cheek against her breast and looked up adoringly, and she bent in her turn and kissed him on the eyes.

The vision stabbed Ben with shame for witnessing his sister's sacred emotion. Then he remembered another thing he had witnessed: he had seen this same youth battling with Susie Caraway for kisses that she only pretended to defend. Ben's muscles clenched as Odalea had felt them under his sleeve. He made one stride toward the door, to rip it open and darting at Mather, throttle him and fling him into the gutter where he belonged.

But he froze in his poise. What right had he to break in on his sister's life? It was her own to live. She was good. She would protect herself. Poor thing, she had a right to a little worship, a little fondling, a little recklessness. He was ashamed of himself for such liberality, for changing the name of protection to meddlesomeness. But he could not interfere.

He made a great noise of stamping up the steps, opened the door with much fumbling, and went into the sitting-room, where his mother sat, never suspecting the fires that were burning on the other side of the parlor door.

Ben said nothing to his mother, but all that night he longed for some way to rescue Petunia from the dangers that were compassing her round.

AS if the Fates had overheard his yearnings and translated them into the prayers of irresistible faith, a letter came to Ben's shop from a Chicago firm to which he had submitted his quick-heating invention, a letter offering to take it up if terms could be made. The letter was written in the lugubrious strain that certain business men feel it good business to adopt whenever they are about to make a purchase; they fear that the slightest twinkle of interest or enthusiasm will cost them untold dollars by awakening the greed of the salesman.

So these gloomy benefactors took the trouble to tell Ben how sad a world it is, how bad business was, how few people took baths, how many better devices there were on the market, and how many compelling reasons there were for their declining to buy. Then for some unexplained reason they expressed a willingness to buy.

When Ben reached this burst of sunlight through the clouds, he was startled. When he read an offer to manufacture on a small royalty to be paid after all imaginable deductions, his joy was quenched. But there was one more ray to follow: if he cared to accept two thousand five hundred dollars for all rights, they would send him their check at once.

There is something glorious about the word *thousand*. It flares on the page as a meteor sings in the dark, and it has a certain splash like the impact of a meteor in a lake.

To poor Ben the word was a comet. He thought first of the car he could buy to rival Evert Bleecker's, of the clothes he could buy to conquer Odalea with. And then he thought of the clothes he had bought for Petunia. The joy of joys is giving joy to others. It has the double merit of enhancing with beauty the one who receives it, and of enriching the one who gives it with the supreme warmth of self-sacrifice. He could send Petunia on her way to glory. More marvelous yet, he could take her away from the perilous philandering of these reckless Easterners who were after all only the cast-offs of the East shining in the village dark by contrast. He could tell everybody that Petunia was too good for Carthage. She was on her way to Chicago, New York,

The Red Book Magazine

Paris, Rome, London. She would sing herself into palaces and dazzle the dazzling opera-houses of Europe with a voice more gleaming than light.

He could make more money out of his invention by waiting for the royalties to mount up. But it would be slow money, and uncertain. Meanwhile Petunia's youth would not wait. She was shaking the bloom from her voice by hacking it about in church choirs, and funeral services, and in the parlors where they were afraid to praise her because she was only a native robin.

Ben dashed off a letter to the Chicago firm, and left the shop to mail it, and went on home to tell the family.

THEY would not let him in the room where his sister Petunia was, for she was standing there half-clad while a sewing-woman agonized about her on her knees.

So Ben must call through the door the wonderful news. Petunia ran to fling her arms about him, and her mother embraced them both. They wept so gloriously that even Guido heard them through the clouds that always swaddled his brow. He came to ask what had happened.

All three of them told him, and Ben was inspired to add: "Come to think of it, there's money enough to send Petunia to Chicago or New York and leave enough to put Guido in college for a year. Next year I'll make more, and then Junior can start off."

Guido, for once, was struck speechless. His Latin and his rudimentary Greek forsook him. He had not even a quotation to cover the shameful nakedness of his happiness before this lightning-stroke that ripped off only his shackles.

That night it rained again, and Cabot Mather called for Petunia in a car all closed in. It worried Ben to see Petunia enter that wheeled cell with that perilous youth, but he was glad that there would not be many more of such perils from him. Petunia had promised to leave for the East at once. If she had felt any regret at leaving Mather, she kept it to herself. And now she could tell it to Mather.

So Ben went out for a walk. He had to wander and breathe. His feet, like the feet in the song, carried him past Odalea's house. He fell back under a gutting tree. The party was just across the street, but a carriage waited before her door. Ben wondered what had happened to Bleecker's car and to Bleecker. He waited for information.

SUDDENLY the Lail door opened, and Mrs. Lail and Odalea, all bundled up and huddling under an umbrella, ran down and clambered into the hack. The driver made a great turn and stopped at the opposite curb. Odalea and her mother got out and ran to the Cinnamon home. This was magnificence indeed. A hack to cross the street in! Carthage was a regular Babylon!

But what had happened to Bleecker? If Ben had known that Bleecker's father and mother had only this afternoon arrived in Carthage and were occupying this evening with planning their son's recall, Ben would have glowed so well that the rain would have turned to steam. Yet if he had known still more, the steam would have turned back to an icier rain than drenched him now.

He was a pauper again. He had given away his first—perhaps his last—windfall of cash. He had the comfort of altruism, but bankrupt altruism is a poor capital to woo a needy girl upon—especially in competition with a horde of girl-hungry suitors from the Eastern realms.

The next installment of this, the greatest of all Mr. Hughes' famous novels, will be of special interest. Be sure to read it in the next, the January, issue.

SORCERY

(Continued from page 55)

por. The new house-boy was tidying the room where the sick man lay—dull-eyed, unshaven, his face beaded with sweat. Selby, who had not consulted a doctor since his boyhood, was sweating with fear, the fear of pain and of death. He had consideration enough not to waken Nina, but he wanted to talk to some one—to be reassured.

"I feel a little better," he said to the house-boy, in the native tongue. His voice was weak, but the lad had sharp ears. He stood his broom in a corner and came softly across to the bed, glancing through the open door to make sure that he would not be overheard.

"Sepi," he whispered, "I know the cause of your sickness! It is *pi'ao*! What have you done to old Tahia?"

"The boy stood there for a time, awaiting a reply which did not come. Finally, with a scarcely perceptible shrug of his shoulders, he took up his broom and went about his interrupted task. Selby lay gazing dully at the ceiling. It isn't hard to guess at his thoughts. He'd spent a good many years in the islands, in half-savage groups like the Paumotu; he was weakened by fever and pain, and temperamentally a man easily convinced of anything verging on the supernatural. Selby must have been worried even then; later in the day, as you'll see, he began to believe whole-heartedly that Tahia was doing him in. Her hostility hadn't escaped him; he understood the old woman's feeling for the girl, and realized that she was an obstacle—the only one, perhaps—in his pursuit of a wife who would combine uncommon attractions with a fat purse.

"He would have been even more alarmed if he'd known that Tahia, whose influence was potent among the natives, had caused his first house-boy to leave, and had substituted for him the lad who was sweeping the room. And his state of mind wouldn't have been improved by knowing that the new boy had been on the watch when Selby had cut his nails, a few days before—had gathered the parings carefully and done them up in a bit of paper which found its way to Tahia's hands. Now they were incorporated in the body of a small, rude image of volcanic clay, together with other curious ingredients of the *pi'ao*—a spider's intestines, for one—

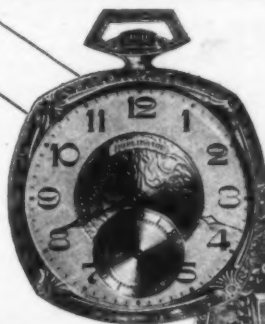
"As the day dragged on, Selby went from bad to worse. He complained of pains in his stomach—pains which grew so severe that he lost control of himself during the paroxysms, and began to scream and shout, almost frothing at the mouth. He wasn't a pleasant sight—writhing and moaning on his bed; but Miss Landon never left him—she wasn't that kind. The house-boy, who was young and a churchgoer, began to feel panicky. He was horribly afraid of Tahia, but now that he saw the *pi'ao* in action, he realized that he didn't want to be a party to the white man's death.

"The doctor and Mr. Landon were in and out during the day. In the evening, during an interval of temporary relief, Selby made Nina a sign that he wanted to speak to her. They were alone in the room. 'The doctor,' he began in a broken whisper, when she was bending over him, '—waste of time. I'm dying—nothing he can do! Where's Tahia?' There was a puzzled look in Nina's weary eyes, but she said to humor him: 'Father told me she'd asked for the evening off.' 'Nina,' he went on, after a moment's pause, 'you must believe me—don't think I'm mad. The old witch is killing me—praying me to death! You must find her—make her call it off. Maybe the house-boy can help you—don't tell anyone else. Don't shake your head. It's true—I've seen it in Fakarava! The *pi'ao*! God! Find her! Find her!'

"Curiously enough, Miss Landon was half-



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convinced. Her own state of tension, Selby's vehemence, his strange illness, which defied the doctor's remedies—these things proved too much for Nina's common-sense. When her father returned with the doctor, a few moments later, she slipped out of the room and found the house-boy on the back veranda. He seemed nervous, and gave a start when she came up behind him, pronouncing Tahia's name. 'Where is she?' asked Nina in a low voice. 'Can you help me find her?' The boy hesitated before he spoke, but finally he raised his head in the native gesture of assent. 'Me know,' he admitted, a little doubtfully. 'Me too much fright! Suppose me go, you no tell?' Miss Landon seized his arm. 'Come!' she exclaimed impatiently. 'There's no time to lose!'

"IT was a starlit night. When they had left the outskirts of the settlement, the boy led the way along a path that threaded the thick brush, over rotten logs and back and forth across a rushing stream, mounting always higher into the heart of an uninhabited valley. Nina was tired and wet; her face was scratched by invisible thorns, and her head ached from bumps against the low-branching limbs of trees. An hour passed—another hour. Then the boy came to a sudden halt in the darkness, and reached back to touch her arm. 'Tahia!' he breathed in the faintest of whispers. 'Me stop here.' Peering ahead through the dense underbrush, Miss Landon saw a ruddy flicker of light. She left the boy among the boulders in the river-bed, and went forward, very quietly and cautiously, toward the light, which grew brighter as she advanced.

"Tahia was squatting by a fire of little sticks. A cool breeze from the far-off heights of the interior came whispering down the valley, and as the flames rose, Miss Landon saw that the Marquesan woman held something in her right hand, and that the fire was built on the smooth floor of a *marae*—an ancient platform of rock, raised on the hillside centuries before. Suddenly the old woman stood up, her body swaying as she began to chant in a voice unlike her own—intoning what sounded like a rude invocation. Sometimes the chant rose to a sort of nasal shriek; sometimes it trailed downward to tones deep as the voice of a man. Certain words, pronounced like names invoked, were repeated again and again; and at each repetition Tahia thrust into the flames what she held. Once she stopped to snatch up a handsome murex shell, and held it 'o her ear. 'Mauri!' she cried. 'Hear me while I bend my strong bow! May your cords entangle his limbs! *Teafao!* May your barbed hooks pierce his entrails! *Puarai!* May your fires consume him utterly!'

"There was a ferocity, a heathen exultation, in Tahia's voice that shocked and angered Nina, though she could not understand the words of invocation. She had seen enough; she stepped forward into the circle of firelight. 'Tahia,' she asked accusingly, 'what are you doing here?' The old woman hid a hand in her blouse, and turned to face the girl; if she was taken aback, her manner did not betray her.

"Tahia's eyes examined Nina anxiously, taking note of the scratches, the bruised cheek, the skirt wet and torn. 'Why you come here?' she said quietly at last. 'Because you must stop!' replied Miss Landon, whose emotion was getting the better of her. 'You're murdering Mr. Selby!' The old woman shook her head as though she did not understand. 'Nina tired—no sleep—think funny things. How Tahia hurt Sepi? Me here—he long way off. No—no!' There was affection and loyalty in Tahia's dark eyes; her soothing voice, her air of incomprehension, nearly convinced the girl. The native woman pointed to an upright slab of rock close by, visible in the firelight. 'My husband,' she explained simply. 'One time he

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die—bury here. Sometime Tahia come sing little bit—old song he like. Now you go—go home sleep—pretty soon Tahia come.

"Miss Landon felt as though she was awakening from a monstrous dream. She realized that Selby's words had given her a sort of crazy hope, but now that was ended, and the man she loved lay very ill—dying perhaps, or already dead. As she was about to turn away in despair, she glanced at Tahia, and saw that the old woman still kept a hand hidden in the folds of her blouse. A faint suspicion took form in her mind. 'What are you hiding?' she asked sharply. 'Let me see your hand.' Tahia shook her head. Nina took a step forward. 'Show me!' she ordered resolutely, in a low voice. Tahia endured the gaze of her eyes for a moment before she replied; when she spoke, the words came in a gust of passion. She tore from her bosom a little image of reddish clay, rudely fashioned in human form. 'Yes, Tahia show!' she exclaimed bitterly. 'Then she break! She burn!'

"Nina interrupted her in the act of hurling it into the flames, of shattering it in bits among the embers on the rocky floor. Without a word, she seized the woman's upraised arm. Tahia swung about with a strength that lifted the girl off her feet, disengaged her arm with a single powerful wrench, and stood gazing down at Nina, who had fallen bruised and exhausted on the *marae*.

"Tears filled the Marquesan woman's eyes—began to flow down her wrinkled cheeks. She sobbed, laid aside carefully what was in her hand, and flung herself down beside the girl. 'My child, my little white pigeon,' she wailed in her own tongue, 'what has old Tahia done to thee!'

"The same night, when Miss Landon stumbled into Selby's house, she found him in a wholesome sleep. The fever and the pain were gone; within a fortnight he was well as he had ever been. Odd, wasn't it? You can believe what you like."

MR. JACKSON filled his pipe from a worn leather pouch and struck a match to light the tobacco carefully and evenly, as old smokers do. He stood up, stretching his arms for a moment before he strolled across the room to the windows giving on the water-front. "They've got all the *Tamahine's* copra ashore," he remarked; "good stuff, too!"

As I stood by the window I saw the seedy white man still idling on his bench under the mango tree. His suit was clean, but he was a scarecrow of failure and poverty. Next moment, thinking of Jackson's story, I dismissed him from my mind.

"Well," I asked after a little pause, "what happened? Did Selby marry Miss Landon?" Jackson turned his head.

"Oh, yes," he said absently; "he married her, all right. Old Landon died within a year of the wedding. They went to America, and Selby spent his wife's money within another year or two. She divorced him finally—some one told me she was dead."

"And Selby—what happened to him?"

Jackson pointed to the elderly loafer on the bench below. "There he is. He drifted back as they usually do. The end of the romance, eh? God knows where he lives, or what poor Kanaka supports him nowadays!"

Thyra Samter Winslow

Perhaps you recall her remarkable stories in the book named "Picture Frames." For the first time one of her stories of realistic romance will appear in this magazine, in an early issue, entitled, "The Usual Ending."

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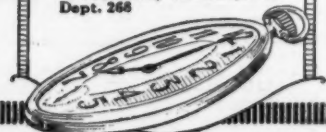


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THE MYSTERY OF CABIN 135

(Continued from page 83)

they can't find any account-books. His many pictures, framed and unframed, are excellent copies of Louvre masterpieces, not valuable, of course, but—

"Yes," I said, "he was supposed to make private sales of such copies to traveling Americans, buying them for a song from poor artists—Italians, Russians, even French."

"Yes, yes. Of course I learned yesterday from his *concierge* that he occasionally dealt in pictures. But you tell me that he was generally *known* to deal in them. I've wire-lesSED the New York police to look for American assets—yes, and one other thing."

"But why—" I began.

"Motive for his murder, of course. I think it was premeditated; yet there was not even a hurried attempt to make it seem like a robbery, and all the fingerprints about that little study off the *salon* are those of Briggs himself or of the woman who kept the place clean. Yes, we are dealing with an intelligent criminal, one able to play a rôle, perhaps for a long time."

Drake's lean dark face was keen with interest when I told him about Briggs' many friendships with nice women, some of whom called him an old reprobate behind his back.

"Lagrange," he said, "thinks that one of those poor artists may have murdered his patron for revenge. When Lagrange begins guessing, instead of reasoning, I know that he's up a stump."

"I'm beginning to wonder how anybody ever solves a murder mystery. But isn't it just possible, Drake, that the person who killed old Briggs did not want him to return to America?"

"Yes," he said dryly, "that had occurred to me." But when I asked him if he had a theory, he only smiled—that quick, keen,

bright-eyed smile I shall always associate with my thoughts of him.

LATE that same afternoon I saw Drake make another quiet move in his game. As we strolled together into the smoking-room, I noticed a tall, middle-aged, smooth-shaven, pasty-skinned man sitting in one of the big padded chairs before the grate fire. He had a dejected air, and the sagging muscles of his face suggested lack of sleep.

Drake went over and sat down in the big chair on the other side of the fireplace. The man glanced at him with his faded blue eyes, nodded his head, then sat staring at the glowing coals.

From my place on the sofa at Drake's right, I could see without moving my head every shade of expression on the man's face.

"A beautiful day, Mr. Mantell," said Drake lazily.

The initial *M!* I glanced at the man's nails—they were closer clipped than the nurse's. Yes, I had fingernails on the brain. I had even dreamed of them the night before.

"A beautiful day," the man repeated without enthusiasm.

"I was just telling my friend here," Drake went on, "that this is the seventh time I have crossed the Atlantic on a Dutch ship."

"Is that so, sir?"

Mr. Mantell did not seem suspicious of my friend's conversational advances. Why should he be? He seemed merely preoccupied.

As Drake made another of his casual remarks, it was clear to me that Mr. Mantell, resigned to our unwelcome interference with his meditations by the fire, pulled himself sharply together. The life came back to his faded blue eyes—intelligence gleamed in

Logic and Women

No other story in the field of fiction makes a greater demand upon a writer's sense of logic than the detective story; and some of the greatest detective story writers in the world have been, and are, women. For instance, there is Agatha Christie in England; there was Anna Katharine Green in her day of "The Leavenworth Case." To-day in America there are several women novelists who have achieved high distinction in writing the logical, inventive, complicated, plotty detective story. And among them none works more neatly or surely or with more logic than Elsa Barker. You'll read the first of her detective stories in the present issue. Before long you'll read another, "The Stains on the Mantel," and another "The Great Sauer-Kraut Case." After that, you'll ask yourself if there's any real justification for the often declared absence of a sense of logic in the feminine mind.

them. I have often noticed how a secretly vain man will suddenly exert himself to make a good impression on somebody—anybody. He began to talk about visits he had made to Notre-Dame and to the Louvre.

"My sojourn in Paris was so brief," he informed us, "I could see only the outstanding things; but having no acquaintances in the gay city by the Seine, I wasted no time in social trivialities."

"A real American business man's holiday," Drake smiled.

"Yes, I shall have been absent from my office less than four weeks altogether. I had only a glimpse of London, a few days in Paris. But next year, Mr. Drake—next year—I hope to return to Europe for a longer sojourn. My appetite for the wonders of the Old World, from which we Americans inherited our culture, has been whetted."

Then he proceeded to deliver us a lecture on the educating influences of foreign travel. "The Discovery of Europe"—he might so have advertised his talk—before some suburban Young Men's Club. Yes, this Mr. M. might well have written Luther Briggs about a "psychological moment" and "assuming command." Yet he had told us that he had no acquaintances in Paris. A lie, of course. But not for our benefit, especially. No, I think he was formulating for himself a future rôle beyond suspicion.

Then I noticed an English newspaper lying on his knee. Newspapers had been brought aboard the ship at Plymouth, and Drake had shown me one containing an account of the Paris murder. But the police had withheld all reference to the clues in our possession. The man in the black beard was mentioned, also the picture-dealing.

"Shocking murder in Paris night before last," Drake observed.

"Yes," said the other in a perfectly level tone. "I read the account." He sat there before us, gazing into the fire. "What was the murdered man's name? I forget," he asked, indifferently.

"Luther Briggs," said Drake.

Mr. Mantell did not turn a hair. He began to talk once more about his "rambles in Paris," and presently he told us, rising slowly from his chair, that he thought he would take "a constitutional." A moment later we saw him through the window, walking on deck.

"Who and what is he?" I asked Drake under my breath.

"A New York wholesale dealer in hardware—or so he told me last night, soon after I scraped his acquaintance."

Drake left me then, as he had done once or twice before when I ventured to ask him a pointed question.

YES, we were in the thick of it already, I told myself. The "prig" was certainly identified. What was his "point of view" which Luther Briggs "must accept"? Not about foreign travel—assuredly. Yes, it had me already—the primitive thrill of the man-hunt. But where did Nurse Diver come into it—the tall, muscular woman whose steamer-fare old Briggs had presumably paid? Was she his daughter? Not likely—he had left all his money to a college!

Just then I overheard the smoking-room steward telling a passenger that there would be a dance in the lounge that evening. I glanced at the clock; I must go and dress for dinner.

Going down the main stairway, I nearly fell backward with astonishment. There, just below me, was Dexter Drake with that Cabin 135 baby in his arms, and beside him was Nurse Diver.

"An adorable child," I heard Drake say, and she answered:

"Yes. I'll be sorry to give him up."

I followed, a little way behind. When they came to the door of our cabin, Drake set the child down on its feet.



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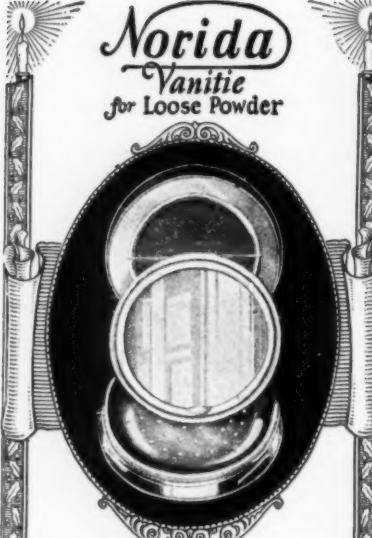
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"Of course you're coming to the dance, Miss Diver. Oh, yes! Bring the little one. He can sleep on the sofa, while you dance." Then he saw me beside him.

"Oh, Miss Diver! May I present my friend, Mr. Paul Howard?"

My heart was in my mouth, as I bowed. But the nurse seemed as natural and unconcerned as a woman at a tea-party. She nodded, gave me a half-smile, then passed on with the child into her own room.

As we closed our door, Drake just stood there, tall and grim, with his back against it. . . . Finally he looked round at me.

"Howard," he said, "any human being who wants my job just now can have it, for—seven cents."

"No bidders," I replied.

He turned and took his dress-clothes from their hook in the little closet. "Then on with the dance!" he muttered.

I think my real friendship with Dexter Drake was sealed in that moment of his revulsion against what he had to do.

"This affair," he said, "is deeper than La-grange imagines."

BUT when we went into the dining-saloon, and I saw the eyes of several women diners follow the tall form of my companion, I told myself that the secret of his profession could never be suspected from his appearance. Dexter Drake in evening-dress was a very distinguished figure.

After dinner we went upstairs to the lounge, where the stewards were rolling back the large center carpet, in preparation for the dance. Drake chose seats at the right, on a sofa which had a little table before it.

Presently I saw Nurse Diver coming into the room, leading the child. She had changed her gray traveling-dress for a plain dark-blue silk, cut round at the neck, and she wore a lace collar.

Drake was on his feet instantly.

"Wont you join us, Miss Diver?" He beckoned to one of the stewards and ordered coffee for three.

The nurse sat down on the sofa at Drake's right, while I moved to a side-chair at her end of the little table. The child seemed very drowsy. She wrapped a white woolen scarf around it, moved a little nearer to Drake, and laid the child down on the sofa between herself and me. Then she patted it with her strong right hand until it fell asleep.

"Poor little thing!" she said. "After all I've been through, in the war and since, it's surprising that I could become so attached."

"Whose child is it?" Drake inquired casually.

"Why, the father is a European salesman for an American shoe-house—Daniel Baxter, his name is. Six weeks ago I was called in as nurse for his wife—a pneumonia case, at the *Hôtel Wagram*. She died. Baxter had heard me say I was going back to America, and last week he came to see me at my boarding-place—asked me if I wouldn't take Billy home for him. He's paying me well. He left the child with me two days before my sailing, said he was going to England on business, but would take a fast boat from there, and perhaps be in America before us—perhaps not. If he isn't at the pier to meet us, I'm to take Billy to Baxter's apartment in West Eighty-sixth Street, and stay there till he comes."

It sounded to me like a credible story—but I knew that my judgment wasn't worth much.

Feeling that I ought to take some part in the conversation, I said: "I hope he's a pleasant sort of person, this Mr. Baxter."

"Oh, pleasant enough. I haven't seen much of him. His business, you know—always traveling about. I wish Billy were a beggar's child—I do, really. I'd adopt him. He's such a dear."

"You're not afraid, then," I said, "to go to a strange apartment in New York?"



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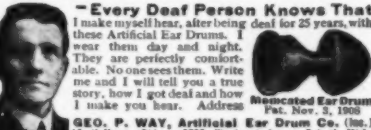
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"I?" She gave an odd laugh. "I," she repeated, "—afraid? After my experiences in Serbia, I don't think I could be afraid of anything or anybody—alive or dead."

A little shiver ran over me as she said that, and I drank my coffee at one gulp.

MISS DIVER enjoyed talking. Prompted by Drake, she rambled on, about her war experiences. She seemed to have no sense of *what* was horrible—dulled to it all, I suppose, by grim familiarity. "Dead men!" she startled me by saying. "I've seen thousands of men die."

Other passengers had been drifting in, pretty girls in evening-dress with young men, and a few older people. I noticed Mr. Mantell sitting all alone on the other side of the room, glum and heavy-eyed. He was watching us, though, through half-closed lids.

The musicians came in. They began to play a waltz.

"Will you dance?" said Drake to the nurse. And they rose and circled about the room, leaving me to watch over the sleeping child.

I don't mind admitting that my thoughts were in a turmoil. It did seem to me that Dexter Drake was playing his game in a very cold-blooded manner. Of course to a man like Drake I must be only a cub; but though Miss Diver's drinking coffee with us was not exactly breaking bread—

My meditations were interrupted by their return.

When the music began, again I glanced at Drake, who lifted his eyebrows—yes, he was signaling me to dance with her.

I did it. With what grace I could command, I danced with her.

Once, in turning, I saw Drake leaning over that sleeping child, moving it gently into a more comfortable position, tucking the woolen scarf round its shoulders, patting it to sleep again. I missed a step, and apologized to my partner, who only said:

"Your friend Drake reminds me somewhat of a surgeon we had in the Balkans. We used to call him the Carving-knife—he was so long and polished and sharp and efficient."

What was the woman *really* thinking about Drake? I was glad when the music stopped, and I could lead her back to our sofa.

Drake was sitting there, his elbow on the table, his eyes fairly blazing with controlled excitement. But as we approached him, instantly he was on his feet, smiling, the man of breeding, as always.

THEN he left me with her, while he danced with a pretty girl in pink, whose mother I had seen him talking with on the deck in the afternoon. The mother had been watching us this evening, with a touch of amused curiosity, as we made ourselves agreeable to the nurse; but when later Drake took me over and presented me, she was simple and gracious, and presented me, in turn, to her daughter. Drake had a way with him, I was learning, which enabled him to carry off anything.

I danced with the girl in pink, and remained with her and her mother as long as I decently could. When I went back to Drake's sofa, the nurse and her charge had disappeared.

"The child woke up and began to cry," he said, "so she took it downstairs. I mentioned to her the sensation in Paris the day we sailed; but she said she hadn't heard of it; nor had she ever heard of your friend in the Rue Moncey."

"But I thought—"

"Yes—that he paid her passage. I still think so."

I wondered then if her whole story had been a fabrication. The problem was too deep for me, and I was glad to forget it for a while by dancing.



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DURING the next four or five days there were few developments. Drake spent most of his time on deck, stretched out in a long chair, quietly reading, while I amused myself with the younger passengers. But Drake and I had many long talks—highly instructive talks, for me. He seemed to know everything, to have been everywhere. And the touch of mystery about him—his reticence about himself and his strange profession—added to my ever-growing interest in his personality.

One day on the deck, when the wireless operator passed our chairs with a pleasant nod to my companion, Drake told me that the New York police had sent him certain facts about Mr. Mantell's life—all very commonplace and respectable. He had a brother Frank, a dealer in clocks and watches on Broadway, and a wife named Fanny. Nothing was known against him. "He does give lectures," Drake laughed.

Though he seemed to have decided not to make the nurse conspicuous by further marked attentions, one afternoon when I went into our cabin I found the Baxter child lying asleep in Drake's berth, while he sat beside it in the wicker chair, reading.

"I'm looking after Billy for an hour," he said, "giving Miss Diver a change of occupation."

I sat on the edge of my berth, gazing at him in perplexity.

"Do you really care for children so much?" I muttered.

"I care for this one," he answered, "because it hasn't any mother. Perhaps you haven't thought about that, Howard."

I had not thought about it. And it was those contradictions in Dexter Drake's character that so often astonished me. He could be so human, for all the ruthlessness of his professional work.

I made some excuse and left the cabin. A shadow lay over my spirits. Would that child be unprotected unless the father came to meet it, on the pier?

Going on deck, I heard the hiss-hiss of the water as our ship drove through it—nearer and nearer to America.

Strolling aft, I saw the nurse sitting in her steamer-chair, struggling with her Customs declaration. I would have passed her, but she beckoned to me, with that easy self-possession which had puzzled me from the first.

"But you don't have to do that," I said, looking down at the long list in her hand. "You've been away from America more than three years, haven't you?"

"But I did go back for a little while, last year. Oh, I'd better put down everything, and be on the safe side!"

I raised my cap and walked on. She sounded so honest! That was the thing that tormented me. Was Dexter Drake following a false clue? Or was this woman the greatest actress in the world?

At that moment I saw Mantell, leaning against the rail. He was looking at the nurse, with dull, uneasy eyes. That was not the first time I had seen him watching her, but always at a little distance. Could he suspect her of killing Luther Briggs—that is, if he had not done it himself?

LATER in the day, passing through a corridor on the way to the smoking-room, I saw Drake with the ship's purser walking past the door of Mantell's cabin. I turned and went back.

And a trifling incident, a day or two before the ship landed, brought home to me the very wide range of investigation which Drake's profession necessitated. He and I were hurriedly dressing for dinner in our cabin, and in shifting his watch and money from the pockets of one suit to the other, he accidentally dropped a small object on the floor. Instinctively I picked it up for him. It was a slender file, of polished steel.

He took it from my hand with no com-

ment save a careless, "Thank you, Howard," and slipped it into his pocket.

I have mentioned Drake's little way of leaving me when I began to ask questions, so I was discreetly silent. But late that evening, when we were alone on the forward part of the deck, he said:

"Howard, I want to thank you—now—for your really remarkable reticence, all through this trying voyage."

But I could endure the suspense no longer.

"Drake," I whispered, "do you know who killed Luther Briggs?"

"Oh, yes! I have known for several days who killed him—and why."

I was alone with my utter amazement. Drake had turned and left me—again!

AT last we were nearing New York. When the pilot came aboard, Drake and I were standing alone by the rail. A moment later a steward came to us, handing Drake a small bundle of afternoon papers. "Pilot brought them for you, sir."

"Something has happened, Howard!" Drake whispered excitedly, as he whipped out his knife and cut the string. He unfolded the topmost sheet, and I leaned forward and read with him:

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Frank Mantell, a dealer in clocks and watches on lower Broadway, was found dead this morning on some rocks at the foot of the Palisades, just below Coytesville, New Jersey, where he lived. His sister-in-law, Mrs. Fanny Mantell, declares that Frank had not an enemy in the world. She thinks the tragedy was accidental.

Though a cursory examination of the dead man's account-books seems to indicate that his business was flourishing, the bookkeeper in the Broadway store says that for the last week or more his employer has been obviously worried about something. Both yesterday and the day before, the bookkeeper overheard Mr. Mantell asking the office of the Dutch Line, over the telephone, about the probable hour when the *Veerdam* would arrive in Hoboken.

"Oh," Drake interrupted my reading, "are we going to be distracted by reporters? I must warn Mantell not to talk."

He was off like a shot, taking those newspapers with him.

"Warn Mantell not to talk." I remembered the form of words in detective stories. "Anything you say can be used against you." But—Frank Mantell—Fanny Mantell! There was an F. in Mantell's letter to Briggs—"F. had a perfect right to confide in me."

We passed quarantine in time to land that night—but only just in time. I had seen nothing of Drake. He was not in our cabin when I was there; nor was he in the dining-saloon when I snatched a hurried dinner. But as we were steaming past lower Manhattan, he came up to me, with that quick bright smile which I always associate with the thought of him.

"Say nothing, Howard," he said, "but keep as close to me as you can."

In the confusion of landing I did not see any reporters, though they may have been there. I really forgot them, watching for Mantell—whom I did not see, either, until I caught sight of him standing in line at the Customhouse desk. He looked ghastly.

Drake's luggage was in Section D, near Nurse Diver's, of course. Mine was farther down the line. Luckily my trunks were among the first to arrive, and as Drake had offered to put me up for the night at his apartment in Fortieth Street, I soon joined him in Section D.

A stewardess had come ashore with the nurse, at Drake's suggestion I learned afterward, and she sat there now on a steamer-

trunk, holding in her motherly Dutch arms the sleeping child from Cabin 135.

Drake was standing there, leaning on his stick in the very English manner he sometimes assumed. He was chatting lightly with a large smooth-faced man with alert gray eyes, and the spruce look of the commercial traveler.

Drake nodded to me. "Still waiting for my trunk, you see." Then turning to the man beside him: "Mr. Baxter, my friend Mr. Howard."

"How do you do?" I murmured; but I was thinking: "Then the father *did* come to meet the boat! So it's all right."

Nurse Diver was hurrying toward us, with a Customs inspector. She was flushed and flurried. I had never seen her like that. With trembling hands she opened her trunks and bags, which the inspector marked after a cursory examination.

Just behind Drake stood three large, stolid-looking men looking off into space. Of course I knew what they were.

Then another Customs inspector, a gray-haired man with spectacles, said to Nurse Diver: "Will you come this way, madam?"

"Yes—oh, yes!" she answered in a choking whisper.

I heard Drake say to Baxter, whose gray eyes had a startled look: "Some little formality, I suppose. Oh, you'll find plenty of taxicabs! Er—surely you wouldn't leave the nurse! If you like, I'll go with you—my friend too. —Come, Howard."

Drake fell back a step, to let Miss Diver, who had taken the baby herself, and the stewardess, pass before all of us.

It happened so quickly, so easily, that before I realized where we were going, I found myself with the whole Baxter party and three or four other men in a small room.

I heard Baxter say: "What an extraordinary proceeding! The nurse had the very best of recommendations." But I was so absorbed in watching Drake that I did not even look round at the other man.

Suddenly the door opened, and I was amazed to see Mr. Mantell ushered in by one of those big men. Mantell's pasty face had now come alive; his faded blue eyes were blazing with restrained fury; he was muttering to himself, and his teeth chattered.

Drake went over to Miss Diver and the sleeping child.

"Here, Inspector," he said, gently loosening the collar of the child's little coat, "yes, that string of large silver beads." Then he took from his pocket a small magnifying glass, and that slender steel file he had dropped on the floor of our cabin one night.

"The third bead from the fake clasp," he went on, "—yes, where the silver is roughened by the file. Take the glass—see the green gleam of the emerald in there? Clever piece of silver-work, Inspector—done by an old expert, no doubt. I can file the thing off, right there near the fake clasp without even waking the child."

It seems to me now that I did not breathe until Drake had the string of beads off. You remember I had noticed them, and the coral pin, that first evening in the lounge on the ship.

"You will find, Inspector," Drake said, "a great jewel in every bead. They belonged to a man in Paris, now dead—Luther Briggs."

There was an exclamation from Mantell, a gasp from Baxter.

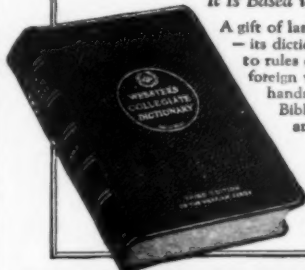
"Briggs intrusted the necklace to one of his two smuggling confederates—shortly before he was murdered. That's why he was murdered. The Briggs smuggling has been going on for years, in a small way. But this was the great coup. The old man was coming home. Briggs cultivated the society of women, secretly bought jewels from them, very cheaply, substituting perfect

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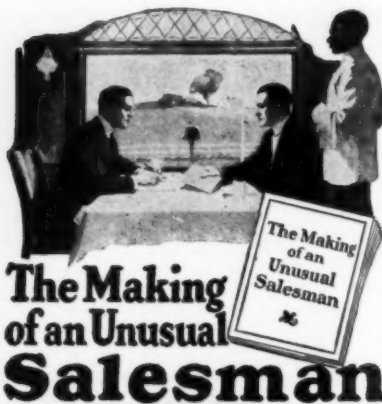
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imitations. Oh, it's often done—extravagant wives afraid to tell their husbands they're in debt to dressmakers. The picture-dealing was only a blind. Briggs had absolute confidence in his confederates. But one of them—Frank Mantell, found dead this morning below the Palisades—became distrustful of the other one, confided in his brother, asked him to watch over the jewels on the ship. It was so easy to strangle that frail old man, and his death left the others in possession."

I heard a clicking sound behind me, then an uproar of voices.

"Come, Miss Diver!" Drake cried. "Stewardess! Come—this way."

WE were out of the room in an instant, the two women, the child and ourselves, and one of the plain-clothes men.

"Miss Diver,"—Drake's voice was very gentle,—"my friend here, Inspector Johnson, will take you and Billy to a quiet hotel. I'll call on you, if I may, at eleven o'clock tomorrow."

She was sobbing—this woman who feared nothing, alive or dead!

"Oh, Mr. Drake! And Baxter told me those beads were sacred—his first gift to Billy's mother—clasp broken—I mustn't try to take them off. Are they arresting him for smuggling—or Mr. Mantell for the murder—or what?"

Drake was patting her shoulder. "You've been splendid, since I told you today about the necklace. They have arrested some one in there. It was Baxter who murdered old

Luther Briggs, two days after he told you he was starting for England. Mantell believes that he also pushed Frank off the Palisades last night. Not knowing that Frank had confided in his brother, when Baxter boldly came to the pier to meet you this evening, he believed himself quite safe, and alone with a fortune of jewels in your innocent care—"

COMING over the Hoboken ferry in the taxi, I said to Drake: "But how did you ever solve it, man—how?" I was clutching his arm in excitement.

"Well—" He paused to light a cigarette. "You might say that the art of detection is finding a common denominator for the fractions of a case. I was first impressed by Luther Briggs' valuable pearl ring. Was there no attempt to make the case look like a robbery because it was a robbery? No man planning to kill another would send him such a letter as Mantell wrote Briggs. Had he suddenly determined on murder at that final dinner? Could an American tourist, unfamiliar with Paris, procure a false black beard between nine o'clock and half-past?"

"It was possible, yes—but unlikely. 'A great wrong,' Mantell had written. But from his 'point of view' in the letter, what was he viewing? When you saw me on the Veerdam stairway carrying the Baxter child, I observed those large beads, which were linked together—not strung. The bizarre dress, the coral pin—yes, the whole tasteless ensemble—would make the beads

The Real McFee

Along the waterfront of any far eastern or southern seaport you might have seen, now and again after lapses of a month or two, a couple of years ago, a chunky, square-jawed chap, with a slight roll to him, and an eye as clear as sunlight, whom you'd have taken at once to be a sailor—and the kind of a sailor you'd rather have on your side in a fight. Saloniki, Alexandria, the Grecian Isles, Naples, Genoa—no matter where, "Mac" would show up sooner or later, and usually with a fold of manuscript in an inside pocket. McFee, he'd be named to you, and presently you'd learn he was an engineer who, when he wasn't watching the boilers, was writing, writing, writing. A good many years ago he published "Casuals of the Sea;" and on the heels of its success, an earlier book, "Aliens," was brought out anew. Others followed—South American travel books, "Command," a novel, "Swallowing the Anchor." A volume of poems and stories will appear in volume form—the stories that William McFee is writing for you in this magazine. Another of them will appear in an early issue—"The Virgin of Loreto," a strange tale of a strange man—and a woman.

almost unnoticeable by anyone not watching every detail of Cabin 135. While you danced with the nurse, I got another glimpse of the beads.

"Later," Drake went on, "I made the opportunity to examine them in our cabin—you remember? A few moments with the file—jewels again! A trained nurse for Baxter's child, with her passage paid by Luther Briggs—therefore Briggs' jewels. Motive for the murder now—robbery. When I learned by wireless from New York that Mantell had a brother Frank, a dealer in clocks and watches,—they generally handle jewels,—I had the 'F' of Mantell's letter; and when I learned from the English police that Daniel Baxter crossed the Channel the day after Briggs' murder,—not two days before,—I had my common denominator, my motive and my man.

"In Mantell's cabin today I told him what his own first intention had been: to 'assume command' on the pier, forcing Baxter by threat of exposure to go with him and the jewels straight to Frank. He solemnly swore to me that he tried to make Briggs recall the jewels—not send them to Frank, and that Briggs was very angry at his interference. But imagine our prig's horror when he read in that English newspaper, off Plymouth, that Briggs had been murdered!

"I was certain that Baxter would come to the pier to meet the jewels. A good traveling salesman has dash, aplomb—check. But between the most daring criminal and his perfect plan may intervene that erratic third element—some incalculable act by another person, like Frank's confiding in his brother. But for that, the murderer of Luther Briggs would never have been discovered.

"Oh, the nurse will adopt Billy—because Baxter will be convicted. Lagrange has a cast of Briggs' neck, with all the bruises marked."

Drake was silent for a little. Then he turned to me in the taxi, his lean dark face suddenly alive:

"It has been a great satisfaction, Howard, for a man in my grim business—helping to rescue that child in Cabin 135."

HANDS ACROSS THE TEA

(Continued from page 68)

mainder of the Peters' stay in England. We do know that Mr. Peters extended his visit there for one month, during which time he set about, with mysterious and ominous assiduity, to cultivate the personal acquaintance of several of the largest tea-importers in London. He obtained letters of introduction to them, visited them at their warehouses and homes, and succeeded, on the pretext of studying the importing situation, in obtaining access to the wharves and retail shops.

And we do know also that on those rainy afternoons when it was inconvenient for him to be paddling about in these districts, he was seen in the library of the British Museum, studying old manuscripts and volumes under the catalogue heading: "Poisons—Wholesale."

You may put these two facts together, or you may not, as you choose. But if you have relatives or good friends now residing in London or who expect to be there during the next month or two, you will take a tip from us and write them either to spend the winter on the Continent or give up tea for a while. *Verbum sap.*, as Mr. Peters would, under no conditions, remark.

Another European adventure of the militant Mr. Peters will be chronicled by rare Robert Benchley in an early issue.



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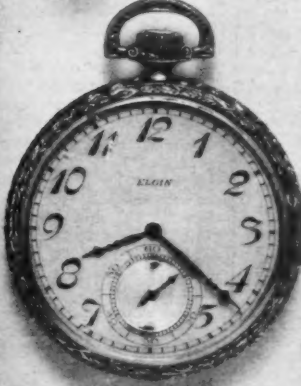
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YOU CAN'T ALWAYS TELL

(Continued from page 90)

hear her laughter and see the sparkle in her eyes.

He flung away his cigarette and went down to the gate.

"Hey, Jenny!" he hailed. "Minnie's come through wit' six pups."

Minnie was Killian's pet Airedale.

"Six? Good heavens! Was the poor thing alone?"

"Naw. I heard her yelpin' an' hiked aroun' to the woodshed. They looks like a lot o' caterpillars."

Jenny flew down the side-path and vanished around the rear of the house.

"Gee!" said Dope, wiping his forehead. "Can yuh beat it? I was a helluva mid-wife. Gee! Kinda hurts to see a dawg suffer an' not doin' nothin' for it."

White held out his hand. "Will you shake?"

"What's the big idea?" asked Dope, hardening up again.

"I can always like a man who likes dogs."

Dope felt hypnotized. He did not want to shake hands with White. He knew that in a little while he was going to hate this young man more bitterly than any other thing on God's earth. Yet he took the proffered hand; and White was surprised to find the hand warm and dry.

"I know a lot about dogs. I'm going to see if Miss Killian has any boracic acid to treat the pups' eyes with. Even in professional kennels you have to be on the watch."

White took the side-path to the woodshed.

Dope returned to his perch on the steps, the pains of hell in his heart and the mirth of Antisthenes the Cynic in his head.

THE resilience of the early twenties! The heart as well as the body! Misfortune strikes with the same futility as water strikes a duck's back.

At the end of two weeks White no longer smiled as he received his daily drubbing: he laughed. His body, tuning up day by day, tonicked a sickly mind. His superior mentality soon made itself evident in his pilloved fists. The old trick of watching the other fellow's feet returned. He began to "read up" this dynamic shadow known as Willie Donlin; and one fine morning he sent Donlin, doubled like a jackknife, through the ropes. Inside of eight seconds Willie was back; but he did not fall in position.

"Y' ol' son-of-a-gun!" he said, grinning. He held out his hand.

So it came to pass exactly as Jenny had foretold. He liked these gladiators, clean living, illiterate; he liked their rough play, their practical jokes; he admired and envied them their control of their tempers. He had never once noted the passion of anger. Because they roared and went *slam-bang* at each other was no indication of temper. There is always something deadly in madness controlled. Never in all his life had he heard such baitings as Killian gave the men; and presently he understood the meaning; the boys knew that Killian was trying to make them lose their tempers, and that they weren't to be caught.

JUNE moved on. Jenny's school closed for the vacation months. At some time during the day White usually found himself with the girl—in the woodshed with the puppies, or on the porch, talking books. One afternoon Jenny got out a couple of rods and guided him to a merry stream which they whipped until sundown, netting a dozen speckled beauties.

Killian paid no direct attention to their companionship. He knew Jenny. She could



in

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Here are the names of those who won the prizes for Real Experience narratives in the December issue of The Blue Book Magazine:

Arthur Gilbert T. M. Vesey
Morrow Krum Lynn Macintosh
R. O. Blicken

All further particulars relating to the plan to publish "actual-fact" stories of Real Experience, for which checks will be sent to the writers on December 1, 1925, will be found in the December issue of

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

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take care of herself in any emergency, mental or physical. Besides, she was twenty-one, on her own; he was not her guardian, but only her uncle. So he proceeded as usual, plotting campaigns for Sands and Donlin. Perhaps his indifference was due to the knowledge he had of White, direct knowledge. In his man's eyes, White had made good; more than that, the boy had a likable personality.

Dope hated White, a hatred steeped in the thought of battle, murder and sudden death. He hoped passionately that, sooner or later, Sands or Donlin would spoil that handsome face, make it ugly and grotesque like his own. He hated White for his pantherlike quickness, whereas his own quickness was monkeylike.

He thought up dreadful plots for the extermination of his enemy, but never put one of these into execution. Jenny was in the way. He mustn't hurt Jenny. If she grew to care for the White-light boob, why, that was all right; if she didn't, why, that was all right, too. He could think evil, but he could not apply it. Jenny alone mattered; the rest of the world didn't count.

What did they talk about in the woodshed with the pups—when they went fishing—when they chatted on the porch—when they sat by the player-piano? The agony of it! He never intruded; he dared not. He might give himself away, though he knew Jenny wasn't the kind who'd laugh. Jenny would cry if she learned that Dope loved her.

And the funny thing was, the boob seemed to like him. Whadda yuh know about that, huh? He was always making advances; and he had to grin and bandy talk when he wanted the boob's throat in his grip. Out of all the training-camps, he had to pick this one!

Many a time, when the house was deserted, Dope would go out to the woodshed and commune with Minnie the Airedale.

"Helluva world, eh, Minnie? You wit' no weddin'-ring an' me wit' a face 'at'd stop a sun-dial. What's the big idea, huh? Sure, them's fine pups; take it f'm me. They's thoroughbreds, an' I'm a mongrel. F'r all I know, I'm an Irish-Wop, out of a Senegambian. My ol' man an' woman—don't know who they was. Say, Minnie, come across. Was it that big redheaded son-of-a-gun f'm the millionaire's camp? I betcha!"

Then he would take Minnie's lean, wiry head in the crook of his arm and sit cheek by jowl with her; and Minnie would rumble with pleasure. For she loved this man into whose soul she could look as no human eye ever might—loved him better than her master, though she hid this passion with that skill known to females the world over. She was loyal to Killian, but her love was Dope's.

DOPE possessed that uncanny gift of true poets and novelists, of seeing through masks, of translating smiles, glances. All he lacked was expression; and woefully he lacked that. He had always watched a newcomer to note the effect upon Jenny. After the first day or so he had ceased to worry. Until now not a man had appeared to Jenny other than just one of the species. But this young fellow who called himself White and was somebody else was as different from the familiar breed as Jenny was different from all the other women Dope had ever known.

Dope wasn't a liar, not even to himself; and he recognized the fact that the glory of youth had returned to the erstwhile wastrel. What intensified his bitterness was the positive knowledge that, with Jenny out of the picture, he too would have liked White.

It was in July that he learned the truth—that Jenny had found her mate. He saw it in her eyes, in her smile—heard it in her voice. He wasn't so sure of White. These



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swells were all alike in covering up. White was always eager to go where Jenny listed; he was always standing up and taking off his cap when she entered or left the room. But Dope could not positively assert that there were any love signs in these actions of respect.

So there came about a change in his desires. He no longer dreamed of exterminating his rival. He dreamed instead of committing some act of colossal irony, of rescuing White from a burning building, of dragging him forth alive from the lake or from under an automobile—of giving him to Jenny.

Should he tell Jenny who White was—the son of Bromley, the millionaire railroad builder? For Killian's little maneuver—the casual destruction of the identifying newspaper clipping—had not hoodwinked Dope in the least. He had seen this boy more than once at the ringside, togged out in "soup-and-fish"—the National Sporting Club stuff. A millionaire's son, booted out of house and home for a row in a fashionable restaurant that had landed him in jail, who never had earned a dollar in his life, who had chased around with Broadway Lizzies until the coin gave out. And Jenny had fallen for him! To warn Jenny now would be to act the sneak; and Jenny despised sneaks. He should have told her in May; now it was too late.

He resented, too, Killian's apparent indifference. What was Jake thinking of? Couldn't he see the way things were going? Ye-ah; what was the matter with Pops?

Thus, Dope was like the will-o'-the-wisp of the swamps, as old wives have it; a soul that couldn't find its way out.

ONE night, when Dope believed the others in bed, he went for a walk. He couldn't sleep; and he knew by experience that a long walk in the night usually induced sleep. On his return—around eleven, for ten o'clock was taps at Killian's—he paused at the house gate to moon at Jenny's window.

Suddenly a strange, puzzling sound struck his ears. At first he could not get the direction; but his eyes, now trained to the dark, presently discovered a dim shape apparently draped across the stone wall. Soft-footed, he approached.

It was Jenny, sobbing.
 "Jenny, what's the matter?"
 "Why, Dope, is that you?"
 "What's he been sayin' to yuh? I'll croak him!"

BEN HECHT

That's a name that is becoming more and more familiar to intelligent readers throughout America. One reason is because the owner of the name never writes a story like anyone's else. Such a tale is the one in this issue. And another that is forthcoming is different "yet again." Men will grin over it and women will wonder. Its title is "Nine Fifty-five"

"What are you talking about? Croak whom?"
 "White."

"You're crazy! White hasn't said anything to me. Why should he? I'm just blue. Women are fools sometimes. The village lets me teach their children, but it ignores me otherwise; and I grow very lonely."

Her voice would have fooled his ears had he not previously noted the love-lights in her eyes. He smiled ironically, trusting the dark.

"When is he checkin' out?"
 "Tomorrow," answered Jenny thoughtlessly.

So that was it? A joyous fire ran over him. Jenny would be his again.

"D'yuh know who he is?"
 "Of course. He told me all about himself long ago."

Dope wanted to laugh. Whichever way he turned, his knife was beaten down.

"What did he say his handle was?"
 "Bromley."

"Uh-huh. Father boots him out 'cause he's a Broadway hound, a souse an' a skirt-chaser; an' he comes up here to git in shape so's he can do it all over again."

"No, Dope. He'll never go back to that again."

"What's he done—ast yuh to marry him?" Dope demanded, his knees trembling.

"Good heavens, no! I'm a school-teacher, and he's the son of a rich man."

"What t'ell's that got to do wit' it—if yuh took a shine?"

"Dope, I would never marry a man who was at odds with his family. I might become an obstacle, a barrier between him and the reconciliation; and in the end he would turn about and hate me. They think differently in that world than we do in ours, Dope. I'm the niece of a man—and I love him!—who manages prize-fighters. We are outcasts; even the village knows it and acts accordingly. So be it. There will always be children to teach. You don't know what it is, Dope, to watch their little minds grow, to be the confidante of their joys and sorrows. And the mischief of them! They are like Minnie's puppies. But I thought you and Johnny were friendly?"

"Oh, he's friendly," snarled Dope. "If he goes to the ol' town, I'm gonna go, too. I wanta pick him up off the sidewalk when his ol' man gives him the leather again."

"Dope, has Johnny ever done anything to you that you should hate him?"

"I jus' don't like his kind, Jenny. You'd better gumshoe it into the house before they's a scandal."

"Good night, Dope."
 "Good night, Jenny."

He crossed the road to the barn and tiptoed to his stall.

So that was it! Jenny loved White, but White didn't care. Dope tried in vain to analyze his emotions. He was glad that White did not love Jenny; he was miserable because Jenny loved White. Oh, there was no mistaking that; he had come upon Jenny weeping over the thought of losing White.

Johnny, she had called him. To hell with him! And yet it was evident that White had played fair. He hadn't made love to Jenny to pass the time. Round and round he, Dope, followed the unbroken circle. He could not destroy White for two reasons: Jenny loved him and the boy had played fair. Dope dug his fingers venomously into his pillow.

NEXT morning Dope was surprised by White.

"Dope, I'm off to New York today. I want you to go with me. I'll stake you to the fare both ways. I'd like your company."

"Well, say!" Dope wanted to laugh; the

desire was almost uncontrollable—sardonic laughter. "Where's the coin comin' f'm?"

"I've a couple of hundreds I've been hanging on to. Will you come?"

"I'll hafta see Pops."

"He's agreeable."

"Company, huh? You're on. I need a little wild life. Lead me to it."

It was not the bid for his companionship that intrigued Dope; it was the grim expression on White's face. The boy was going right in to Daddy and tell him what was what; and a guy named Dope would be witness to the scene. He had dug up some interesting facts about Bromley Senior, a man as tough and rigid as his rails; and the meeting would be a hot one. Besides, he would be seeing the last of Bromley, *alias* Johnny White. Ye-ah.

The good-bye was general—at the breakfast-table. White shook hands with everyone. He did not maneuver Jenny apart from the others to say good-bye to her alone. He did not hold her hand any longer than he held Killian's or Sands' or Donlin's. Dope wanted to kill him for Jenny's sake—hug him for his own.

IT was an all-day ride on the train and it was hot and stuffy. The oddly assorted pair whiled away most of the time at pinochle. They got out at Utica and Albany to stretch their legs. From Albany to New York they snoozed in spine-twisting positions. At ten the train drew into New York.

All through the day Dope had covertly studied the tanned handsome face of the man he hated, to discover some weakness if he could. All day long his eyes encountered a set grimness which nothing he said nor did could lift. This was not the face of a man on the way to beg parental forgiveness; on the contrary, it was that of a man about to demand a reckoning.

"We'll take a taxi, Dope."

"It's your coin, M'Lord. Aint it too late to see the ol' man?"

"My father? If he ever sees me again, it will be the result of an accident."

Dope at once understood, to use his own expression, that he had wandered up the wrong alley.

"But why the poison-ivy mug all day?"

"The what?"

"That map o' yourn. Look's if yuh'd been eatin' nails."

"Oh. That's why I wanted you to come along. I've got a little business to transact, and I want you to witness it."

To the taxi-driver he named a famous club. He then turned to the astonished Dope.

"I'm still a clubman, Dope. Paid for my room and dues up to next January. Good hunch, wasn't it? Place to sleep until I land a job."

"Yuh aint comin' back wit' me to camp?"

"No."

For a moment Dope became wildly happy. He wanted to hug his enemy. But the recollection of Jenny sobbing—

AT the club the doorman spoke respectfully, though he looked askance at Dope, whose expression was blasé. He was as impenetrable to the visible grandeur of uniforms as the armadillo probably is. Dollars to doughnuts he knew some of these club guys by their first names, for Dope's acquaintance was as wide as it was mixed. Entering his room and bidding Dope sit down, White proceeded to open his trunk, out of which he took a light summer suit. He dressed in silence.

"Is the ol' man in town?" asked Dope.

"I suppose so. When he's not in Europe or South America, he's always sure to be in town."

"Uh-huh. What's this gonna be t'night—prelim or main bout?"



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understood. It was his mug. He couldn't get by anywhere with that. A volley of hair-lifting oaths rumbled against his teeth; but he remembered Jenny in time.

"J'ever make any mistakes?"

Cerberus looked up, frankly astonished. "We all make mistakes sometimes," he admitted.

"Well, take it f'm me, you're gonna make one helluva mistake unless yuh git me to the boss. Got some news about his son that wont keep."

"Ned?" The guard jumped to his feet. "I'll tell him at once, though he gave orders not to be disturbed."

"Wait a minute. Don't wanta see yuh come back wit' the spiel they aint no son. Tell him if he ever wants to see his son alive again, he'd better see me."

"He's dying?" cried the guard, aghast.

"Naw. But that'll git a rise."

"I'll tell you frankly, if Ned is after money, this is the wrong shop."

"Not a nickel, not a plugged buffalo. He don't even know I'm here."

"All right," said the guard. Within five minutes he was back. "The first door. I hope your story's good; otherwise you may come out on your head."

"Leave it to me," replied Dope jauntily.

HE was unafraid; he would have faced a dozen Bromleys as unagitatedly as presently he would face one. The secret of this nonchalant approach was, he wanted nothing for himself. Besides, thirty of his thirty-six years had been spent among the rough of temper, so that he himself was no mean antagonist in a verbal war.

He entered the private office, closed the door and stood with his back to it. During the brief tableau that ensued, the eyes of the rat clashed with those of the eagle. Dope saw the cold blue eyes, the square chin and the grim mouth of the man who had literally hewn his way into fortune. Bromley saw a countenance that was palpably criminal, save the beady eyes met his squarely, unwaveringly.

The boy, he thought, had fallen pretty low to have chosen such a messenger.

"Well, how much money did he send you to get?" Bromley asked insolently.

"He gives me his right eye to sell to yuh. How much 'm I offered? I git yuh. Not a damn, whedder he's sick or dyin'. How much coin! Yuh gives him a wad an' says 'Don't bother me!' An' 'en, when he toboggans to hell wit' it, you gives him the boot. Ye-ah. You're a helluva father."

THE blow was as unexpected as it was true and straight, and Bromley gasped inwardly. This wizen, rat-eyed man had with one sweep of the hand, torn aside the veil Bromley had refused to look through. The phrases he had marshaled to smother this emissary with became useless rubble.

"Is he sick and in need of money?"

"Naw. He aint sick an' he don't want any money."

"Then what does he want?"—growing bewildered. For all this was out of the beaten track.

"Nothin' f'm you. It's Jenny."

"Oh, I see. What comic opera—"

"Cut it out," snapped Dope. "Jenny's none o' your Broadway Lizzies. I thought mebbe y'd like to come to the weddin'."

"What? Wedding! What the devil is he going to support a wife on?" demanded Bromley, getting back on familiar ground again.

"I dunno; but he will."

"You've more confidence in him than I have."

"Sure. I know him an' you don't. You jus' handed him the coin an' let it go at that. A guy who c'n turn himself f'm a hooch-hound into a he-man aint gonna wonder where the job's comin' f'm. But I git



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yuh. You're lookin' at this mug an' speculatin' am I a dip or a second-story man. Well, I aint. I'm Jake Killian's scout."

"And who might Jake Killian be?"
Dope could scarcely believe his ears. "Yuh never heard o' Jake Killian, the whitest man in the fight game?"

"Ah! So this son of mine is to become a prize-fighter? Well, that's logical. Whisky, women and fists."

"You're all wrong, Mister. He horned into camp to make a man of himself, an' he done it. Took a lickin' every day for three months; an' now he can give an' take wit' Sands. Git that? Sands!"

BROMLEY was becoming deeply interested. The undercurrent of truculence in a man who should be whining puzzled him.

"Sit down. What is your name?"
"My legs are all right. They calls me Jimmy Conway when I signs things, but they calls me Dope because I has it on every pug in the country."

"Has he a job in prospect—my son?"
"Oh, I didn't say he was gonna git married first. It's like this: It'll make Jenny happy to know that you'll come when the weddin' takes place."

"Does she understand that she wont be marrying a single dollar of the Bromley money?"

Dope laughed. "Jenny aint no gold-digger; she's a school-teacher."

"Who is she?"
"Killian's niece; an' he's got all kinds o' coin an' nobody to leave it to but Jenny. She's the kind that wouldn't marry your son if there was a row on. So I comes on my own to ast yuh to bury the hatchet until after the weddin'. Git me right," said Dope, with a snarl. "I hates your son like poison-ivy."

"You hate him?" Bromley's bewilderment returned, utter bewilderment.

"Ye-ah. He's got everythin' that I aint. But I can't touch him, 'cause Jenny loves him."

Dope did not appreciate what he had done—bared his soul before the eyes of this cynical millionaire. But there was no cynicism in Bromley; on the contrary, he felt small and mean.

He rose from his chair and walked to a window and stared down the gray cañon. He turned abruptly.

"I used to be a good sport myself. Perhaps it's not too late to dig up a spark. Will you shake hands with me, Mr. Conway?"

"What's the use? I hate you, too. All I wanta know is: will yuh come to the weddin' when it happens?"

"Yes. Where is this camp?"
"Yuh leave here at midnight an' git there in the mornin'."

"When are you returning?"
"T'night."

"Then I'll go with you. I'll engage a stateroom for both—"

"Nix. I rides in the smoker."
Bromley smiled. "Do you stick to your friends the same way you stick to your grudges?"

"That's me," said Dope, and immediately departed.

Down in the noisy street he came to a halt and scratched his head under his cap. That was funny. He couldn't remember. What book was it where. . . . Gee! That was funny. He couldn't remember what hero he had imitated. He moved on, cudgeling his brains. Suddenly he smacked a fist upon a palm. He had it! That guy who had taken another guy's place at the guillotine! Him and Jimmy Conway! Huh?

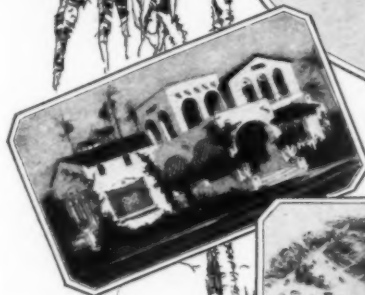
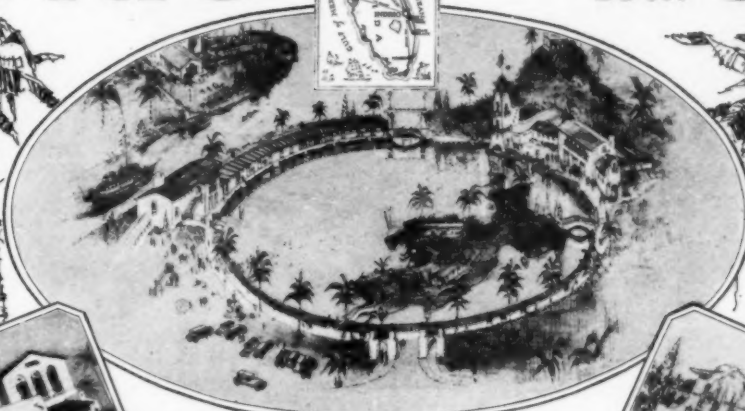
He continued his way, smiling contentedly.

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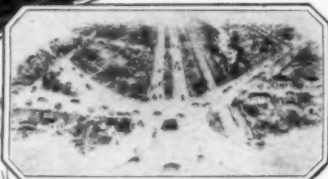
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Left: A suggested Indrio home of Mediterranean architecture

Above: The Oval Basin, Indrio's proposed salt water bathing casino

Right: Suggested duplex apartment building for Indrio



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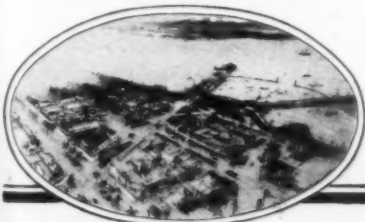
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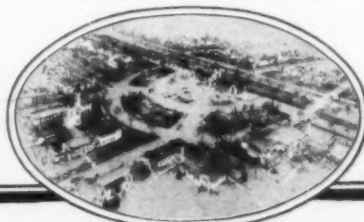
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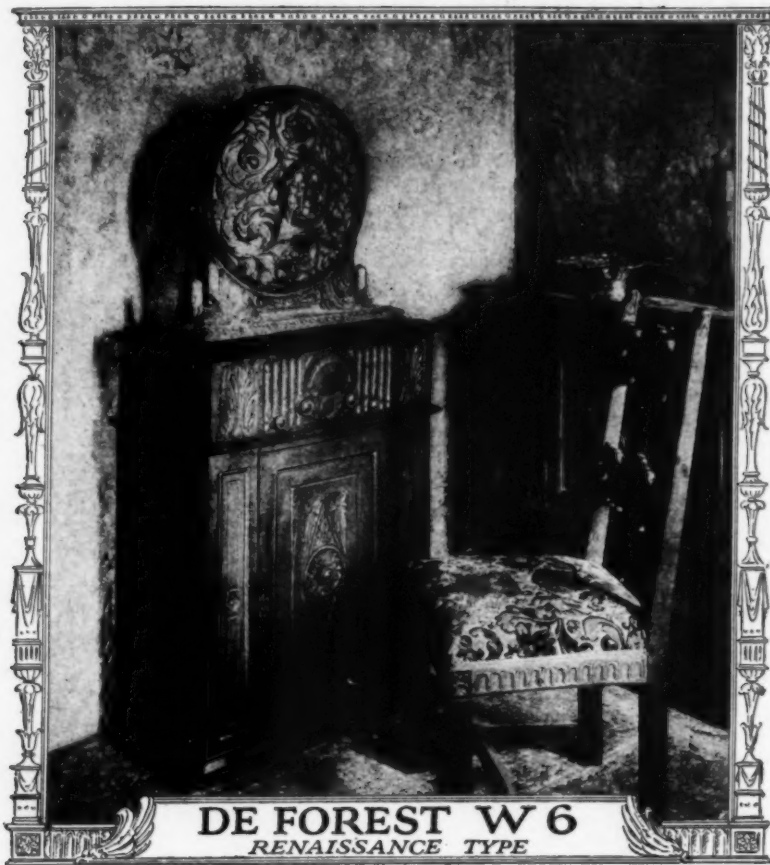
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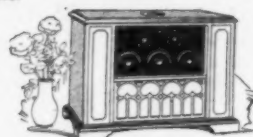
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